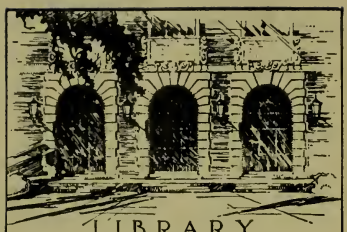
TREGARTHEN

By

G. Norway



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
N832t
v.2

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2009 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

http://www.archive.org/details/tregarthen02norw

TREGARTHEN

VOL. II.

TREGARTHEN

BY

G. NORWAY

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, LIMITED,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1896.

All Rights Reserved.

823
N832t
v. 2

TREGARTHEN.

CHAPTER I.

MABEL'S EYES ARE OPENED.

THE family were all gathered in a small drawing-room when the two girls entered. Mabel's blushing face betrayed her suppressed excitement and nervousness, but her reception gave her shyness no fresh food.

Lady Sarah received her very courteously.

'I am sorry, my dear, that I should have been driving out when you arrived. We

did not know exactly when to expect you. I hope that you found everything comfortable, and that your dear little brother is not over-tired.'

'Everything was very nice, thank you,' said Mabel. 'Steenie is asleep now. He was very tired, but your maid was extremely attentive and kind.'

'Hawken is a good creature,' said Lady Sarah. 'I am glad that she looked after you well.'

So little did Mabel ever think about herself, and so engrossed had she been with her little invalid, and with Dorothea's information, that it had never before occurred to her that she had been received with scant courtesy by this great lady. It did now cross her mind that her mother would never have allowed a drive to stand in the way of her welcoming a young stranger come to visit her house for the first time. She understood something of

what Dora had meant in one rapid flash of comprehension, and her colour deepened to carnation hue.

Lady Sarah was all affability now, however, and presented her to Sir Theophilus, who was decidedly cordial.

'Very happy to see you, my dear young lady. I have a great respect for your worthy aunts, and I knew your grandfather well. A remarkably fine old gentleman he was; I never knew anyone who could tell a more amusing story, or who rode straighter across country.'

This, be it known, was the highest praise which Sir Theophilus was ever known to bestow upon a man. In itself it comprised all the virtues.

Charles was by her side, a little glow upon his brown face, a happy light in his eyes. It was so good to him to see her standing there, blushing and smiling softly, with her hand in that of his father.

'My son, my dear, my son Charles.'

'Miss Selby and I are friends already, sir,' said Charles.

'To be sure, my boy, to be sure,' said the old gentleman. 'I knew Miss Selby's grandfather very well. I can laugh now to think of some of his good stories. I never knew anyone who told better ones.'

'How is Steenie after his journey, Miss Selby?' asked Charles. 'And how did your mother bear the parting with him?'

It was a pleasant relief to feel that some one in this strange place cared for the home subjects so enthralling to her, and Mabel felt more at ease immediately.

Dinner was announced, and Sir Theophilus offered her his arm. This formality, and the grandeur of all the appointments in the dining-room, renewed her perturbation, but she found nothing to be afraid of in the kindly old man when seated by his side, with Charles at her other hand.

'We are very fond of your aunts, my dear,' said Sir Theophilus. 'They have been our nearest neighbours for many years, more years than I like to count. And your sister, a fine girl, a very fine girl. Got a look of your grandfather about her eyes.'

'You have been very kind to her, and to my brother, sir,' said Mabel. 'My father feels much indebted to you.'

'Not at all, my dear, not at all. Your brother and sister have been very helpful with my niece. They have all been busy together, drawing. Your brother made some very pretty sketches in the park. Do you draw too, my dear?'

'No, sir.'

'Miss Selby sings, father,' said Charles. 'She will sing to you after dinner, I hope.'

'Not your new-fangled German music, I hope,' said her old host. 'I cannot un-

derstand that at all. There is not enough tune in it for me. Now, your grandfather used to sing,

> "A southerly breeze and a cloudy sky,
> Proclaim it a hunting morning."

There is a fine song for you!'

Mabel laughed.

'I could try to sing that for you if you wish,' said she, 'but it suits a gentleman's voice better than mine. I will sing what you like, though.'

She talked pleasantly to the old gentleman, following his lead, listening to his stories of former times, and attending with gentle interest to them.

After dinner she played a rubber with him against Lady Sarah and Charles, and beat them, taking ungrateful advantage of the unwillingness of Charles to trump her best suits, for which his mother scolded him, though he would not admit his misdemeanour.

'Sensible girl that,' said Sir Theophilus. 'Plays long whist like her grandfather; reminds me much of her grandfather.'

'Now you will sing for us?' begged Charles.

'With pleasure,' replied Mabel. 'Do you like the Irish melodies, Sir Theophilus, or would you prefer an old English song? Here is the "Beggar of Bethnal Green."'

'A pretty old song, my dear, a very pretty old song,' said he.

He beat time with his fingers for a little while, and then went to sleep under cover of the music, while Charles sat a little behind her, listening in bliss, and looking only at the delicate little rings of brown hair which had wandered from the huge knot coiled low at the back of her head upon her white neck. He had never felt so happy in his life before. This was his own home, and she was taking a place in it.

All retired before eleven o'clock, and the sisters were free to sit, in their dressing-gowns, over the cheerful little fire still kept up on Steenie's behalf that rainy autumn evening.

He slept peacefully in his little crib beside it, and Hawken sat beside him with her work.

'The dear little gentleman have been quite happy, miss,' said she. 'He just woke up and had some bread and milk for his supper. Mr. Charles came up to see him while he ate it, and brought him up some sweetmeats from dessert, and then he went off to sleep again like a lamb.'

'Mr. Grenfell came up to see him!' cried Mabel, in surprise.

'Yes, miss. The little gentleman was so pleased to see him.'

The maid retired, leaving the sisters alone.

'You have made a conquest of Sir

Theophilus, Duchess,' said Dorothea. 'You have started well, it was a capital thing to secure his good opinion like that. It pleased her ladyship, and of course you see that she is the ruling spirit here.'

'But, Dora dear, I did not act by design, it was surely right to try and make myself pleasant to the people who are so kind to us.'

'That is just what I say. One has to do so, because they would not trouble themselves to be kind to us if we did not make ourselves useful to them. If we were stupid, like those Miss Carthuans, we might wait long enough for their kindness.'

'Dora dear, I don't like to hear you talk in this cynical manner. It is not like you.'

'You will see that I am right, though, before you have been here long. One learns worldly wisdom when one is launch-

ed upon the fine world,' pronounced this experienced young woman of sixteen, after her two months' taste of Vanity Fair.

Mabel felt saddened, and perplexed what to say. This was a new Dorothea, and she did not know how to deal with her. The girl began again,

'Don't make any mistakes such as Horace has, Duchess. I did not think he could have been so foolish; but, do you know, he has really been such a goose as to fall in love with Augusta Courtney!'

'Horace! You don't say so! Poor Horace! What does she say?'

'She! You make me laugh, May. You are so very simple. Why, it is the last thing she would think of. It is all right and proper for people to be devoted to her, and wait on her hand and foot. She is sweet and gracious, and all that, but it would as soon occur to her that her

writing-master, or her gardener, or her groom even, was in love with her as Horace. "Oh, thank you so much!" is sufficient payment for any man out of the focus of her own set. Nobody else has thoughts or feelings to be respected.'

'Dora dear! And Horace?'

'Why, Horace is a fool.'

'Poor Horace!'

'I have no patience with your poor Horace. Here he is, wasting good honest love on a girl who does not value it more than a tuft of thistle-down,—who would teach him his place in a moment if she guessed that he presumed so far. What is the use of his thinking that a life's devotion would ever win her? Here he is going to conquer fate; to win a place which will give him a right to speak: to toil, and labour, and all that, as if she would ever think about a clerk in the Indian Civil Service! He has no more

idea of the real Augusta than that child sleeping there has. If he were to marry her he would not know what to do with her afterwards. She would be a white elephant upon his hands.'

'And yet you seem to like her!'

'Oh! yes, I like her, I like her very much; but, then, I have some sense, and can see just how far it is worth while to give out one's best heart to such people. I know that I am of use to them, and they must be of use to me. It is give and take, that is all, and it is a good thing that liking of a sort can come by the way.'

'Dolly dear, that is not the way papa and mamma look on things. Don't you think that people should like each other spontaneously, because they cannot help it, perhaps,'—Mabel's voice dropped very low,—'perhaps because God makes them do so, and that, if one can ask His bless-

ing on what one feels, it will be right somehow?'

'Yes, that is all very pretty, May. It is like a good little Sunday book; but not practical. It takes a great many sorts of people to make a world, and we are put to live in the world, and must do the best we can with it.'

Mabel looked very grave.

'I cannot say that you are wrong, Dolly, but I do not feel, somehow, that you are right.'

'Well, May, do you think it is in common sense for a man like Horace to let himself think about a girl like that one, who spends every year upon her dress alone what would keep half of us put together? Is it likely that she would cast a serious thought at him? or, if she did, what could be the end of it? They could never marry; Horace could *never* keep her; so is it not as well as it is? Horace

will come to his senses in time, and see the matter practically for himself. Augusta is only fit to marry a rich man—one of her own sort.'

'Yes, looking on it from that point of view.'

'There is no other point of view from which to look upon it. Love is all very well for poetry, and plays and songs, and fairy stories. All those tales take a little bit of life, a year or two perhaps, and then they end up with "So they lived happily ever afterwards." But would people live happily if they were wholly unsuited to each other in habits and thoughts and requirements? You know that they would not, Duchess.'

'Perhaps not.'

Mabel's dreamy half-assent irritated her sister, who poured out a perfect tirade of worldly wisdom upon her devoted hearer. May could contradict none of it; nor, in her heart, did she believe in its truth.

Yet was it impossible, after Dorothea had preached herself out, to sink into rest in the calm old girlish fashion. She felt that this summer had made her older; all of them had left former times behind them—the careless happy times,—and they were launched upon a tide which was bearing them away:—whither?

All was altered; all slipping away from her grasp; it seemed as if she had left every familiar scene, and gone into a fairy-land, where 'Changing like that inconstant gleam is their inconstant shape,' and nothing was real.

Behind all the anxieties caused by Dora's information regarding Horace; Dora's new development; Dora's own prospects, lay a new shadow of dull pain into whose face she dared not look. The very shadow gave her such a heart-ache; made her feel so desolate, so helpless; so much as if she were wandering in a desert-

land where was no water wherewith to refresh her parching lips.

That shadow, though of shape as inconstant as any other vague ghost haunting her mental vision, took the form of Charles Grenfell.

What had he to do with this sense of dismay and unreality which had crept over her? She did not know, she could not think. She sank upon her knees, and covered her eyes, but she could form no connected supplication; she knew not for what she had to pray; she could only cry in her heart, 'Father, father, I am afraid, help me, guide me.'

Tears came to her relief; for what was she weeping? She could not tell herself; she hurried into bed, choking down her sobs lest they should disturb Steenie; and there she covered her face, and cried herself to sleep.

It was a fair fresh autumn morning

when she awoke. Steenie had passed an excellent night, and was sitting up, in his smart scarlet wrapper, looking frail and fragile to the last degree, but cheerful, and able to play with the little white dog.

He was to breakfast before he was dressed, and May had begun to wash his face and hands, to refresh him for it, when Hawken came in, and seemed to be so shocked at her doing it, so apologetic for not having heard the young lady ring, that Mabel felt reproved for the affectionate task which was second habit to her. So shy did she feel, that she did not like the idea of kneeling for her own prayers, or hearing Steenie say his, before the woman. This was, however, so decided a duty, that she forced herself to it, though the devotions were but words, words, words, that morning.

There was a hurry to get Dorothea's packing done in time, her possessions

having largely increased in bulk by presents since she had been there. Mabel would have liked to have seen Horace, but he had gone to Polzeath the day before, in the carriage which had been sent for her and Stephen, and had remained there to pack up, and help in the removal. At an early hour, the waggonette stopped at the lodge gate for Dora; it had already taken up the four from the aunts' cottage.

Mrs. Selby was wistfully enquiring as to Steenie's fatigue, how he had been through the night, etc, etc., there was no time for anything; Dora took her seat, the carriage whirled away, and Mabel felt abandoned by all her own. There was a lump in her throat to be choked down; but Charles was there, so gentle, so understanding, so attentive and pleasant, that the feeling did not last long. He talked of her mother as they returned up the avenue, said how lovely she was, how he admired

her, how he should miss them at Polzeath, how charming a companion her father was, how clever Horace and Dorothea,—and May was quite comforted before they reached the house.

Then began the life of the next few weeks, a life more empty for poor Mabel than she had ever dreamt of. There was nothing for her to do. Hawken took all the work of waiting upon Steenie, all the trouble of her own toilette off her hands. Steenie was not to do any lessons, he was not strong enough, but he made a start in health almost at once here, and his little crutch became familiar to him. He was delighted to stump about the place, and visit all the animals. Matthews, the young groom, was told off to attend to him out of doors, and see that he came to no harm. Matthews drove him about the park to see the deer, he carried him in his arms when he was tired; and it was so good for the

child to be in the open air as much as possible, that he was thus quite taken off his sister's hands. All the upper servants made a pet and plaything of the boy, who was as happy with them as the day was long.

Mabel practised, read, wrote bulletins to her mother, and sat at work with Lady Sarah, but oh! how dull the life was to her! She grew so tired of the inaction, of being a guest, of being entertained! She went to see her aunts, but the paucity of intellectual interests in their lives appalled her. She got on best with her Aunt Rose, who came in and out of the Hall very frequently; but even her charities seemed so small and puerile to the London-bred girl.

If she lived there, duties and employments would have sprung up naturally about her; but, as a visitor, she had none, and she ate her heart out in secret. The

grandeur of the house, its wealth and importance, grew upon her, and oppressed her more and more with the sense of contrast between her own simple home and this. Lady Sarah's conversation also opened more each day the sense of difference and inferiority between them.

Her ladyship was much occupied in thought about the wedding of her niece, and all its details. She described the jewels given to the bride, the sets of this and necklaces of that; the family diamonds presented by the bridegroom; and the parure to be worn on the wedding-day. She herself had been much exercised in mind as to what her gift should consist of.

'Sir Theophilus gave some very nice rubies,' said she, 'and Charlie a pearl bracelet, so I thought I would like to send something quite different, and was puzzled as to what it should be. Hap-

pily, Augusta let it appear by accident one day that poor Louisa was rather mortified because she had so little lace in her *trousseau*. Her mother could not give her more than three sets of flounces. There was Honiton for her wedding-dress, and the veil. That was very handsome, of course. Augusta designed the pattern herself, and it was really lovely, they tell me. Then she had a set of white, and a set of black Brussels, but only odds and ends besides, and what she had before. But the dear girl was so thoughtful, she knew that her half-sister, Lady Medlington, had had an expensive *trousseau* only last year, and that both she and Augusta had been presented this year, and she determined to be moderate. So my mind was made up at once, and I gave her a really handsome set of Chantilly. Do you like Chantilly, my dear?'

Mabel did not know the peculiarities of Chantilly, and felt painfully conscious of her mother's one black-lace gown, ten years' old, and now re-furbished for her. She laughed at herself for feeling her own inferiority over such things, but the sense was there, and galled her. She felt so very humble, so small, so worthless, among all this finery, though despising it as made of importance beyond its value.

She only felt really at ease with Charles; the more she saw of him, the more she liked him—and, oddly enough, the more sorry she felt for him.

Yes, sorry, for she saw that he was lonely among all his prosperity. His was the only mind among all his people which was not common-place. It was the consequence of this element of the common-place to put an inordinate value upon these fineries as possessions, not as means to an end. They heaped together

these things, and prided themselves upon them *as things*, not as tools to be used for great and noble actions. Charles was capable of a better life, of higher aspirations, greater deeds; and he had no companion, no sympathy for his deeper soul. Mr. Jackson left him to pass the last fortnight of his vacation with his own family.

Mabel was thrown much upon the young man for society, and saw this loneliness plainly; perhaps the more so because she was suffering from it herself.

Compassion and gratitude combined, made her think much about him; with what result may easily be imagined. Mabel was not the girl to fall passionately or suddenly in love; but she was the girl to become gradually and deeply attached. She was no heroine for a play or a sensational novel; but she was the

woman to make a tender wife and a happy home.

Before she knew what she was doing, she found herself loving Charles Grenfell with her whole heart; and woke up to the knowledge that she was possessed of his.

All Dorothea's worldly wisdom, all her precocious insight into the characters around her, flashed upon her in the instant when she acknowledged this mutual affection to herself; and she recognized its truth. What could she do? What must she do?

CHAPTER II.

MABEL'S TROUBLES.

MABEL'S first instinct was to shelter herself behind Lady Sarah. She worked in her morning-room, drove with her in the afternoon, and, donning her pretty tea-gown, waited upon her during her afternoon refection, and read to her afterwards.

This answered capitally for two days, during which, thanks also to picquet with Sir Theophilus after dinner, she scarcely saw Charles to speak to him. But, from the first day of her visit, he had regularly

sent her flowers for her evening toilette, chosen and gathered by himself; and how either to wear them, or to refrain from doing so, was a great perplexity to her.

She did not know whether it might not be a regular custom of his to pay this slight attention to every young lady staying in the house. If this were so, to place too high a meaning upon it would be to betray consciousness, and make herself ridiculous.

Whether Hawken thought anything of it or not she could never discover. The woman was perfectly well-bred in her vocation, and showed no suspicion.

'Mr. Grenfell's compliments, miss; a few flowers,' was her regular formula, with an unmoved face.

Mabel longed to ask whether Mr. Grenfell always selected his cousin's flowers when she stayed in the house; but never

could bring herself to gossip with the maid. She talked to her pleasantly and frankly while accepting her services, but it was about general topics, the weather, the country, her little brother's health, and so on.

She found out that Hawken had a younger sister in a draper's shop in Oxford Street, without possessing many friends in London. She wrote to her mother about the young woman, and Mrs. Selby made time to go and see her; and asked her to tea in the nursery on Sunday. Nurse was kind to her, and introduced her to Mrs. Rosewarne and her crippled daughter.

Hawken was grateful for this kindness, expressing herself warmly about Miss Selby, in the housekeeper's room.

'She is a sweet young lady,' said she.

'The lady all over,' added Purvis. 'Matthews, he says 'tis a pleasure to take

that dear little gentleman about, too.'

'They 'm all true Cornish to the backbone,' said Mrs. Symons.

Thus the servants' dictum was all in her favour; but, perhaps, none the less so for Mabel's reticence. None are better judges of a lady than the people who wait upon her behind the scenes.

One evening Mabel would not wear the flowers waiting for her as usual, and Charles noticed their absence at once.

'Are you as particular about what you wear as my cousin Augusta is?' asked he. 'She will have everything so exact to a shade of colour, that there is no pleasing her. Did my orchids offend your æsthetic taste?'

'No. Oh! no,' said Mabel, colouring high. 'Any colour looks well to black, you know. It only seemed a pity to let such lovely flowers fade in one evening, by wearing them.'

'I cannot but be gratified by knowing that you care to preserve them,' said he, in a low voice, colouring through the bronze of his face almost as highly as she.

Poor Mabel! She had not bettered matters, so she wore his flowers next evening, though they were rarer and more lovely than ever. She thought herself very clever in substituting picquet with Sir Theophilus for the evening rubber, taking advantage of a little weariness of whist betrayed on one occasion by Lady Sarah. But that did her small service, for Lady Sarah was apt to fall asleep in the evenings, and Charles would sit opposite to her, a little behind his father, book in hand, but not missing a chance of talking to her.

Then Sir Theophilus liked her singing, and always asked her to favour him before they retired. There were certain senti-

mental songs of former days which reminded the old gentleman of his youth, and for which he regularly asked. Foremost among these was 'Love's Young Dream,' to which he would beat time, drumming on the arm of his chair. What had he formerly known about Love's young dreams which that song recalled? Lady Sarah never showed any particular predilection for it. She had never sung at all, neither had Sir Theophilus, even in his earliest youth. But evening after evening he always begged his young guest to give them 'his favourite song,' and she complied, though feeling it more and more difficult to oblige him without a quaver in her voice or tears in her eyes.

When Mabel first went to Tregarthen, it was a pleasure to her to take an early morning walk about those beautiful grounds, enjoying the flowers sparkling with dewdrops, or wandering about the

conservatories. When she first met Charles upon one of these rambles, she thought it an accident; but it occurred a second time, and even a third, so she gave them up, and found out that her brother was now quite well enough to read a little every day, and that it was best to hear him do so at that quiet hour.

Then Mr. Jackson left Tregarthen, and Charles came to his mother's room to have afternoon tea with her. What were Lady Sarah's eyes and thoughts about that she observed nothing? She had been quick enough in detecting an admirer for Mabel's aunt. How was it that the affairs of the niece escaped her attention so entirely?

Poor Mabel struggled on without help from anyone. She perceived more plainly each day the vast difference between Charles and herself; the consequence with which everyone regarded him, his wealth, his importance to all about him, the hopes

entertained of him, the plans for his future. Who was she that she should interfere with all this, that she, with her inferiority, should blast all these intentions, and hinder his career? Would she thrust her unwelcome self into that lordly home, among these grand people? No, no, indeed, a thousand times no! Mabel was far too proud for that.

But there was a sad traitor at her heart, and pride had a severer battle each day. There was nothing for it but flight. She would go home. She must be wanted to resume her place there; her mother must be missing her much. But Steenie was now improving so fast, the place suited him so admirably; he was gaining strength so rapidly, though still terribly fragile, that she did not like to take him away.

Mrs. Selby wrote also that workmen were very dilatory. The drains of their house had been discovered to be in an un-

satisfactory state, and it was a great relief to her that the delicate child should not be at home until all was in proper order.

'I hope, my dear Mabel,' she wrote, 'that you are not outstaying your welcome, but it is really a great convenience that you should be away for a little while longer. Dorothea went yesterday to see all Miss Louisa Courtney's *trousseau* and presents, and came back full of their beauty. Three hundred wedding presents! Such jewelry, such lovely things! The ruby set given by Sir Theophilus is magnificent; Mr. Grenfell's pearls very choice. Poor dear Dorothea was much gratified to see her foxglove picture among all this finery. She said that it did not look at all ill. There were not many pictures.'

This was the bride who had felt 'rather mortified,' according to Lady Sarah, because her mother *could not afford* to give her as much lace as she wished for. Were

she, Mabel, to marry, who was there to give *her* lace or jewels?

Miss Rose had walked over to see Lady Sarah that morning, and Mabel determined to put away thought, and return with her to drink tea. Her other aunts would like to hear Dorothea's own letter, describing Miss Courtney's presents.

'You will not mind my not coming back to dinner, Lady Sarah, will you? I will return early, most probably before your dinner is over.'

'Yes, my dear, do not be late. Sir Theophilus will miss his game.'

'We drink tea so early that she will be back in plenty of time,' said Miss Rose. 'We will walk part way with her, over all the lonely part of the road, so there will be no need to send for her.'

Charles was to go to the wedding next day, and Mabel hoped thus to avoid last words from him. Once from home, she

hoped that he might find inducements to stay away, and thus give her a little breathing time.

Miss Rose talked of nothing but the Miss Courtneys and Charles.

'I suppose he will marry Miss Augusta,' said she. 'It is evidently intended on all sides.'

'I do not think it likely at present,' ventured Mabel, timidly.

'Oh, my dear, it will be, depend upon it. You mean that it is not likely because Lady Sarah is so ambitious. So she is, and her connections are of much higher rank, certainly; but, my love, they are as poor as church mice. Sir Theophilus has had enough of them, you may be sure. There is Lord Walter, always horse-racing and gambling; and——'

'Aunt Rose, I do not think that you ought to tell me of Lady Sarah's affairs. They are no business of mine.'

'No, my dear, certainly not, but everyone knows Lord Walter's reputation.'

Mabel would not hear more, and Miss Rose was a little huffed.

'This girl was her mother all over,' said she to herself.

But she put the offence aside as they drew near the cottage gate, and saw the pleased welcome on Miss Letitia's thin face.

'I am so glad to see you, my dear,' said she.

'And I have brought you Dolly's letter, auntie; all about Miss Courtney's grand presents.'

'That will be a treat to hear,' said Miss Letitia.

The letter staved off all dangerous subjects of conversation during the whole of the tea-time; and, afterwards, Miss Selby, after a little private discussion with her sisters, rather solemnly placed an old-

fashioned dressing-case upon the table.

'We think, my dear Mabel,' said she, 'that as you and Dorothea are now so nearly grown up, and are beginning to go into a little society, you ought to possess a few ornaments. We have noticed that you never wear any, and suppose that this is because you have none. So we have made up our minds that you each shall have your share of the family trinkets.'

'This is very kind of you, aunts,' said Mabel, wondering a little as to what these trinkets consisted of.

The box was opened, and its treasures displayed.

There were four miniatures, two of gentlemen in pigtails and powder, much beruffled as to their linen, short-waisted as to their blue and claret-coloured coats. Two were ladies, gravely dignified, with hair dressed over cushions, and folded muslin kerchiefs.

There were some handsome old paste buckles and brooches, a pretty cross of Cornish diamonds, a string of nice pearls, and sundry rings, a few of which were antique and quaint.

'Now, my dear,' said Miss Selby, when all had been admired separately, 'we think that you should have this ring. It will look well upon your hand when you play on the piano, and this locket, with pearls, will set off your dress in an evening. This paste brooch will also help to make you look well-dressed; and Dorothea shall have the cross and pearl chain, which is about equal in value. The other girls shall have their share when they are old enough to take care of the things. There will be more to divide some day after our time, for we have each our proper share; and we think that Horace, when he has a house of his own, ought to have the miniatures, because they are por

traits of our ancestors, and he will be the head of the family.'

Mabel made all suitable acknowledgments, and was really pleased to possess a ring which, though old-fashioned, was very handsome. She loved old things, and cared none the less for her new acquisitions because they were antique; but oh! how the contrast between Miss Courtney's lavish presents, and the importance attached to these baubles, struck her!

The Courtney wedding passed off brilliantly; but Miss Augusta took cold at the ball, which concluded the festivities, and it became apparent that she must hurry to the south of France for the winter. Even the mild climate of the West of England was not fit for her through the winter.

The loss of her sister, and the low spirits consequent upon her illness, though a short one, made her more eager than

ever to have Dorothea Selby's companionship, and her mother could refuse her nothing, even were her desires less reasonable.

Augusta was now in the place of her eldest daughter, the first to be considered.

Lady Courtney felt glad to go abroad, to retrench a little after the very heavy expense of launching Lady Dereham upon her prosperity.

To go at once, enabled her to avoid opening her country house for a succession of shooting aud hunting parties; and she determined to remain abroad until the commencement of the next season.

Augusta would, she hoped, then return with renewed health and beauty; she would probably marry her cousin.

Charles was too young yet; it was diplomacy to keep matters in abeyance for a time. Marriage for him would be absurd before his college career was run;

and it was not well for young people to be engaged very long before settling. Complications were so apt to arise with delay.

Thus reasoned Lady Courtney. Sir Thomas communicated with Mr. Selby; offered advantageous terms, which neither Frank nor his wife considered themselves justified in refusing, and Dorothea became Miss Courtney's companion.

On the evening of the day after the wedding, Charles arrived at home again, smiling.

'Why, Charles!' exclaimed his mother, 'we thought that you were to stay at the Courtneys all the week.'

'Well, mother, Augusta has taken cold again. She was very seedy when I got there, and told me that nothing less important than the wedding could have induced her to keep up at all. She had to go away to bed in the middle of the ball

last night, and Aunt Di looked so worried this morning, that I thought it only charity to take myself off. What a lovely day it has been, Miss Selby. Where did you and my mother drive?'

'We did not drive to-day, Lady Sarah preferred walking in the grounds.'

'Well, will you let me drive you to-morrow over to St. Neot? There is a curious old church there, and other bits of antiquity, in which you would be interested.'

'Not to-morrow, thank you; Sir Theophilus has kindly proposed to drive me round part of the woods, where some timber has to be felled. Steenie is to go too.'

'I'll go with you, father. Your timber is far and away finer that Uncle Tom's. I was quite struck with the difference.'

That night, Mabel sat up late, writing to her mother; and a piteous letter

went off next day, imploring for a recall.

Mrs. Selby was perplexed. She could not imagine why her daughter should be so homesick; but she was glad to have her 'right hand' at home again; Dorothea did not, by any means, fill her sister's place adequately, and the summons was sent.

Then did Mabel begin to count the hours which remained for her in paradise, and to mourn over the swiftness with which they fled.

She knew that she had acted wisely in putting definite end to the conflict of her spirits; yet did she dread returning to her old harness, and taking up her former round of duties, unrelieved by any glimpse of the face which had grown dearer to her than all others, by any sound of the voice which was music to her soul.

'It must be, it must have come!' she said to herself. 'Oh, I will grow used to

it by-and-by. He will forget, and all will go back to the old ways soon. Mamma must want me.'

And tears would come in showers, tears which were no relief to her.

CHAPTER III.

CHARLES PROPOSES.

An early day was fixed upon for Mabel's return, and so popular were she and Steenie in that household, that there was a general wail upon the fact becoming known.

'My pretty!' cried good Mrs. Symons, 'how we shall miss 'ee and the little crutch! But you must come and see us all again very soon.'

'Yes, very soon,' said Master Steenie, whom the housekeeper had indulged to the top of his bent. 'Oh, Mrs. Symons,' cried he, in the same breath, 'you have

new sweet biscuits; how nice they look! May I have one?'

'As many as ever 'ee du like, my dear,' said she. 'He du know his way to the biscuit-tin as well as I du myself, Mr. Purvis,' continued she, turning to the butler, who entered her room at that moment.

'Ay, ma'am, he be what I call a very knowledgeable young gentleman. You won't forget us all when you go home to London town, will you, sir?'

'No, never,' said Steenie, putting his arms round the old man's neck as he lifted him on his knee. 'And the Duchess says that you will come to London in the spring, and then you shall come and see me. And I am going to send you a photograph of Mannie and me as soon as I go home. The Duchess says I may.'

'I wish your sister was a real duchess, that I do,' said Purvis. 'She is as sweet

a young lady as ever I see. I never knew any young lady as it was a greater pleasure to serve. And to hearken to her singing for master of an evening!'

'Ay, I du set the doors open many a time to hear her,' said the housekeeper.

The master himself was sorry.

'We shall miss you sadly, my dear,' said he. 'The house will seem wisht without you and the little one.'

'Thank you, sir; we have been very happy here. You have been very kind to us all,' said Mabel.

'Then you must come and see us again very soon, my dear,' said he.

Charles looked up quickly, a glow upon his face. He seemed about to speak, but changed his mind. He had determined to say nothing to Mabel until the last day, that all awkwardness for her might be avoided as much as possible afterwards, whatever her reply might be.

He was young in years, but decided in character; masterful by education. He was no man to be made the sport of circumstances, and he seized his opportunity for speaking to her exactly when he planned to do so.

In a plain, straightforward, manly way he told her that he loved her—that she, and she alone, could rule his happiness for life, and he asked her to marry him.

And Mabel refused him. It could never be so, she said.

'Miss Selby,' said he, 'something more is due to me from you. Do you say so because there is no attachment to me in your heart, because all my earnest love for you is powerless to arouse the faintest echo there, or have you other reasons? Deal with me plainly, sincerely, I entreat you.'

Mabel shirked reply.

'This would be too unwelcome to Sir

Theophilus and Lady Sarah,' said she. 'I am wholly unsuited to you, I should not make you happy.'

'Will you allow me to be the judge of that?' replied he, firmly,

'Lady Sarah would not, could not like it,' continued Mabel. 'Sir Theophilus would object strongly.'

'I do not ask you to marry either of them, but myself,' returned the young man, keeping resolutely to his point. 'This is not answering my question, Miss Selby. Have you *nothing* to give me in return for my true love for you? Do you not care for me at all?'

'We are both—at least, that is—you are far too young to ruin your life, Mr. Grenfell. Your friends would tell you so, whoever you may consult.'

'If you can tell me in earnest that you do not care for me at all, there will be no need to take counsel with any of my

friends. If you could, if you do love me, ever so little, Mabel,'—the cadence of his voice softened here unspeakably—'if ever so little, I shall not care what *anyone* says besides.'

'Lady Sarah has other views for you.'

'If you mean that she would like me to marry my cousin, want must be her master. Under no circumstances shall I do so. Mabel, do you love me? Don't play with me, tell me the truth.'

'It could never be, it would be wrong.'

'Do you love me?'

'You ought not to press me so hard.'

'This is a question where the happiness of your life and mine is at stake, and it is no time for any but plain truth. Mabel, do you not love me?'

Again that tender cadence. It overpowered poor Mabel; she burst into tears, and tried to hurry away. But he would not let her; he held her hand firmly in

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

his close, warm grasp; he looked down on her with an expression that softened every line of his countenance, a glow that pervaded his whole form.

'Mabel,' said he, 'if you will not tell me, I will not press you further now. I will come to you next time with my parents' consent, if possible, but come I shall. And I shall love you all my life, and if you will not be my wife, no other woman in this wide world ever shall be. I will wait for you, prove the reality of my love for you by any ordeal which you or my father and mother may please to exact. But this is for ever with me.'

She broke from him without reply, and kept out of sight of everyone for many hours.

Hawken brought her a letter later in the day. She put it into a fresh envelope unopened, and sent it back. When she

went to dress for dinner, the woman came to her with flowers.

'Mr. Charles sends you your flowers, miss, as usual.'

'I do not think I will wear any to-night, Hawken, thank you,' said she.

'Why, miss, your aunts are coming, and the clergyman, and some other people.'

'I think I would rather wear my dress plain this evening though,' replied the girl.

She sheltered herself well among her aunts, went in to dinner with the curate, talked to the ladies, and sang for them; did her part, though with a sad refrain, through it all.

'Mabel is very sorry to go, I see,' said Miss Rose to Lady Sarah.

'We shall be extremely sorry to lose her,' was the courteous reply.

'What was the matter with Mabel to-

night?' asked Miss Selby, as they went home. 'She looked to me as if she had been crying.'

But no one could answer her.

As the train steamed across the fair southern counties of England next day, Mabel Selby sat in one of the carriages, with her brother on her knee, gazing out at the flying landscape, with eyes too full of tears to see anything distinctly. Steenie looked up at her.

'Is you sorry to go home, Duchess?' asked he.

'No, dear, I want to see them all again,' replied his sister.

'I thought you looked sorry,' said he. 'I am sorry, but I want to see Mannie, and papa, and all too. Charles gived me such a beautiful doll to take home for Mannie, and Lady Sarah gived me a musical-box for my very own; and Hawken made a bonnet and a gown for the doll, and

petticoats and things; and Mrs. Symons gived me a box of good things, and Purvis gived me a ball; and Matthews gived me a dog's tooth, and I am to have it made into a scarf-pin when I'm a man!'

Mabel could not help laughing at this climax.

'And the old gentleman, Charles's papa, gived me five gold shillings, and told me they was my very own, and I might spend them as I liked. Did they give you any pretty things, May?'

'Yes, dear, they are very kind people, and you love them dearly, don't you?'

'Yes, I love them all. I love Matthews best, I think. And oh! May, Charles said I was to give you this when we got near London.'

He took from his dress a sprig of myrtle pinned into his bosom. Around the stem a slip of paper was wired, whereon was written, 'I shall never forget you.'

Mabel put it into her own bosom, but made no remark.

Charles Grenfell, in the meantime, had sought his father. Instinct told him that it would be wise for Sir Theophilus to hear what he had to say, in the first instance, directly from himself, not through the medium of Lady Sarah, who would probably administer his information with a very different colouring.

He, therefore, followed his father into the study where he spent his mornings, and after hanging about for a little while, uncertain how to begin, made a bold plunge.

'Father,' said he, 'I am going off to Oxford so soon now that I want to have a little talk with you over certain matters which affect us all. I want to understand my position, and for what I must aim in the future.'

'Your position is a very good one,

Charlie,' said the old gentleman. 'Tregarthen is in a very comfortable state, and there is no one but you to inherit it. I have done my duty by the land, my boy, I do not see that there will be any need for you to aim at anything further than you please.'

'I suppose, father, that I may marry when I meet with any lady who will have me? Marry, that is, to please myself!'

'Why, yes,—certainly, yes—dependent upon our liking the lady too. But no fear of that. Tregarthen is strictly entailed, you know, and I have always spent all available capital upon extending and consolidating the estate. It yields a good income, but it is all *there*, if you understand me, my boy. I have thought it best for you to have as much land as possible, and have made all my investments with that view. I should like the Grenfells to be the first family in the West of England, and there

is no reason why, with prudence, you may not leave them so to your son in your turn.'

'And if I met with a lady without fortune, would you further my wishes, sir?'

'I should regret the absence of fortune, but I married myself almost wholly without it, and would put no constraint upon you, providing there were other advantages to counterbalance that omission. But your cousin Augusta will have a very fair portion, there is no difficulty there.'

'I do not mean to marry my cousin, sir.'

'No? Not marry the girl? Why, why, your mother gave me to understand——'

'My mother gave me to understand also, sir, but it will not do. I have thought it over, and it will not do. There has been too much intermarriage with cousins among us in times past, father. I have

heard you say so many times, and always thought you so wise. Look at the results. From some inherent weakness of constitution, coupled with misfortunes that may beset any family, we are dwindled down to you and me. Any further failure will render all your care for the estate fruitless, and it will go off, the Lord knows where, for an heir.'

This was a favourite theory of Sir Theophilus, but much had Charles thought of his father's hobby when he saw Mabel Selby singing in the cavern!

'True, true, Charlie. Augusta is but a wishy-washy sort of a girl after all, and the whole set of them is very delicate. I fear that my poor sister has trouble before her. It will be a wonder if poor Tom lives much longer.'

'And, father, it would be well for me to marry young, would it not? Say, when my course at Oxford is completed?'

'Yes, yes, certainly. We would have Trevarna fitted up for you. It would make a very pretty place, and you and I could work together, and your mother have her grandchildren growing up about her. Yes, yes, certainly. Marry as soon as you have completed your Oxford terms, by all means. You will then be twenty-three, rising twenty-four, a very good age. But you should make it clear to your mother that it is not to be poor Augusta. Do you mean me to infer that there is any-one else in view?'

'Yes, father.'

'You young dog! You don't mean to waste any time, I see. Who is it?'

'Father, you have said several times how much you like Miss Selby.'

Sir Theophilus gave a prolonged whistle.

'Miss Selby!' cried he. 'No, no, Charlie, *that* won't do.'

'And why not, sir?'

'Oh, come now, why not? There is plenty of why not. The young lady is not your equal, Charles. You must not marry beneath you.'

'She is a lady in every sense of the word, sir.'

'Yes, yes, true enough. But there are ladies and ladies, my boy.'

'I agree with you wholly, my dear father. Ladies and ladies, and Miss Selby is the lady for me. Look at the matter rationally, father, I beg you. Look at it as you yourself have often shown me how to regard these matters. We are a race that is fast dying out in the land. Intermarriages and consideration for the estate alone has resulted in a fine estate, and scarcely anyone to enjoy it. Suppose I were to marry into any family about here? Is there one who would bring healthy vigour of body and mind, such as we require, among us. That is what we

Grenfells need now, not money or lands. You would not like me to bring in among us the taint of insanity, or more consumption, or wild blood, or spendthrift habits.'

'No, no, certainly not. You are the only hope of the good old stock, and must think of all that. But you must marry in your own rank. This would not do at all.'

'Miss Selby, father, has beauty, talents, energies, health of body and mind. She has what we West of England people call "sprawl," and would make a man of me. To think that I am working for her would be to make me work hard at Oxford, and try to do something with my life. Do not take away all motive from me, my dear father, I am much attached to her.'

'Have you told your mother?'

'No, sir. I thought that I ought to come to you first.'

'Yes, yes, you were right, my boy.

There are certain things that it is best for us men to talk out together first; but I wish your mother knew. She will not like it, she will never allow it.'

Sir Theophilus was ruled by his wife more than he was willing to admit. He got up now, and walked up and down the room in anxious perplexity.

'I wish she knew,' he repeated more than once. 'How far has this gone?' asked he at last, lifting up his head.

'I have asked her to be my wife, sir, and she has refused me.'

'Oh, then there is an end to it!' exclaimed Sir Theophilus, in a tone of relief.

'No, sir, there is *not* an end to it. I am very much in earnest, and have some hope that she really likes me, but she sees the objections from your point of view as strongly as you.'

'A sensible girl, a very sensible girl.

Yes, Charlie, your mother will never allow it. It really will not do, my boy.'

A tap came to the door. Lady Sarah wanted to know of what the father and son were talking, and made some excuse for joining them. The matter was opened to her, as soon as Charles had placed a chair for her, and she had seated herself in state. But she rose in awful dignity upon hearing the tenor of the information awaiting her.

'Marry Miss Selby! The daughter of a man who paints pictures for sale! The sister of your cousin's companion! My dear Charles, do you suppose that such a thing could be permitted? That it could even be discussed!'

Sir Theophilus visibly quailed.

'I told him so, I was just telling him that you would never allow it,' said he, nervously.

'I allow it! I should think not! The

thing is monstrous, absurd. That is the worst of having anything to do with that sort of person, they never understand the lines of demarcation!'

'Mother!' cried Charles. 'I cannot hear you speak like that. Miss Selby is a lady in every way. A woman can be but a lady.'

'A lady!'

Lady Sarah's tone of scorn was grand. She really appeared to grow and swell as she stood before them. Charles instinctively thought first of the helmet which fell into the courtyard of the Castle of Otranto, and then caught himself repeating privately Hood's lines:

> 'My name was Little,
> But now my name is Moore.'

He restrained his smile, which was perhaps a pity. Had Lady Sarah seen it, had she realized that her righteous indignation only created a satirical amusement in her

son, and failed to impress him one whit, she might have perceived that she had received an answer to her prayers, and possessed in her son a Grenfell who had resolution and individuality enough to see his path and keep to it over any obstacles—a Grenfell with force of character which, if properly directed, would enable him to become something great.

But she did not see this, and thought to overpower him, as she had, ere now, overpowered his father, by her own firmness of will.

'We shall serve no purpose in discussing so absurd an idea,' said she, waving her hand as if waving the whole matter away. 'You are too young to think of such things, Charles, you will understand ranks and connections better in course of time. It is well for you that you are under age.' And she swept from the room in great state.

Charles held the door open for her, closed it as she swam out of sight, and turned to his father.

'Now, sir, I do not know that I expected any attitude very different from this in my mother, *at first.* But she will change her note in course of time. You and I think better of this matter than she, we look upon it from a different point of view. There is, I dare say, no use in maintaining discussions now, but I want you to understand me thoroughly. I have made up my mind, and, if I can persuade Miss Selby to marry me, I will have her for my wife if her father painted doorposts instead of pictures. But I can wait.'

He departed in his turn, leaving Sir Theophilus a prey to many conflicting feelings.

He sympathized heartily with his son; he was surprised to find how hearty his sympathy was.

'Poor dear Lucilla!' he said to himself;

and thought of a grave, in a London cemetery, beside which he always stood thoughtfully, and with an aching memory, upon every visit to the metropolis.

'This girl has something of her style about her, only *she* wore her hair in those beautiful ringlets. No, there is nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream, and no air to the words half as sad. People thought that I should forget, but I have not, I never shall. I would like the boy to have his will. Dear, dear, when I come to think, I was not older than he. This is a sweet pretty creature too. The boy has good taste, he is a thorough Grenfell. But his mother will never consent. No, never. It is a pity. Augusta has not nearly as much in her as this Miss Selby, not nearly so much. I have seldom met so sensible a girl as this. She is like her grandfather. But Sarah will never allow it. Poor Charlie! Well, well.'

He sighed, and murmured to himself, 'No, there's nothing half so sweet in life,' as he stood at his study window, watching his son, with hands buried deep in his pockets and head hanging down, sauntering across the sunny lawn, and disappearing among the shadows of the shrubberies by the path to the wood.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ELDERS TAKE UP MABEL'S AFFAIRS

MABEL and Steenie were welcomed home with rapture which should have contented the girl.

'The house has not been like itself, my dear, without you,' said her father.

'Dear child, I have felt quite lost without you. I never knew before how much you do for me,' sighed her mother.

'It is jolly to see you making tea again, Duchess,' said Horace. 'Dolly's tea is, like herself, apt to be—what shall I call it? Bitter? No, not for worlds would I

use that word. Let us say strong. Strong, that is a nice euphemism, *n'est ce pas, Dollabella mia?*'

'If I were you,' cried Dorothea, with scorn, 'I would make up my mind beforehand as to what language I meant to show off in, and not make a hotchpotch of half-a-dozen in one speech.'

'You see, Duchess,' explained he, 'we are trying to live up to the refinement of people who are going off to Italy to study art. This is difficult for ordinary mortals, and we do get a little mixed sometimes.'

'Shut up, Horry,' cried Guy. 'Did you see Aunt Jenny's rabbits before you came away? Is the lop-eared one that she calls mine all right?'

'How many Poland chickens came from that late brood?' asked Walter. 'Is she likely to rear them so late in the year?'

'Oh, Mabel! I have worked the most lovely tea-table cloth from Aunt Lætitia's

pattern. I am longing to show it to you!' cried Felicia.

'Mab! I have got such delicious new duets. I want you to play them with me, for Felicia is so taken up with the violin now that she has begun to study it that she won't take my basses.'

'Oh! Miss Duchy dear, I'm glad to see your face again! The missis and I are just worked to death with the winter things. The young ladies, and Master Guy, and Master Walter outgrew every mortal thing they had while we were away, and there was no time to sew for such a long time that we don't know where to turn now that the cold weather is to hand.' This from nurse.

It was the same cry from all. She was wanted; she had been missed; she was loudly welcomed back to home on every side; but why, oh, why did no one, not even the father whose close companion

she was—not even the tender mother—seem to think about her affairs?

Home! The same dear old home, full of noisy, loving beloved ones, full of simple tasks, of merry laughter, of innocent pleasure. The same home in which she had always been so happy hitherto. Why did she feel so out of tune with what used to be so delightful?

The stately calm and quiet of Tregarthen had oppressed her much when she first went there, but now it seemed as if home were terribly noisy, and the deficiencies in it struck painfully upon her. Were things always so rough? Was their table always so ill-appointed? Was the common sitting-room always littered to such a degree with shabby school-books, torn music, children's toys, baskets of garments wanting mending? Was the drawing-room,—still, as ever, kept up for a best room in case of visitors calling,—was it always so

formal, so cold, so like a room never used by its owners?

Perhaps all this might be worse than usual from her own absence for so long a time; she struggled to keep the rooms neater and improve matters. She persuaded her mother to have a fire in the drawing-room every afternoon, and sit there for quiet; she got some ferns and palms to put there, and coaxed her to buy a couple of small wooden tables and a bamboo flower-stand for the apartment. By-and-by she would stain these tables with marquetrie work, or paint them, perhaps. There was no time now, for Dorothea's wardrobe was in course of preparation, under difficulties. But a little art serge was an improvement at once; and Dorothea, sympathising with her sister's efforts, managed to paint two or three little decorative articles with her skilful hands; and, out of her newly-acquired

riches, presented the room with a railed shelf on which to arrange them.

'I wish I could help you more, Duchess,' said she. 'You have done a good deal, though. I felt just as you do when I came home first, but had not the energy to set to work as you have done, and as I ought. When I am gone, you will have a little more time, and just make Horace help you. It will be better for him than mooning about, thinking of Augusta.'

'Of Augusta! Of Miss Courtney! Dorothea, surely all that has passed off?'

'Not a scrap of it. He is worse, I think. It is a very good thing for Horace that we are going away so soon. He will come to his senses before we return, I daresay; but he is a goose, Mabel, as much of a goose as ever.'

She would say no more; indeed, there was little time for confidential talks; all was hurry. Mabel felt as if all the

foundations of the old home happiness were loosened, and the superstructure unsteady. Had the boundaries of it contracted, or had they altered in shape and size, that she could not fit into her place among them as she did of yore?

Dorothea and Horace seemed to feel something of the same change, but they were spreading their wings for flight, she alone must remain, sore at heart, with a sense of being cabined and confined there; she must struggle on alone.

This discontent appalled her; it oppressed her with a sense of guilt; she prayed to be relieved from it as a sin; but no help seemed to come to her in answer to her prayers. Her tiny sprig of myrtle was her one comfort. She kept it near her heart, but told no one of it.

How was it that her fond mother perceived nothing of what had changed Mabel so much?

Mrs. Selby had returned home to find everything very cosy and comfortable after the deprivations of Polzeath. The pleasantness of new papers and paint, the fresh cleanliness of the house, the warm winter curtains—the very influences which helped to make the shabby old furniture look so inadequate in the girls' eyes—impressed her much more than any deficiency did. She looked upon things from a different standpoint. Also she was engrossed in preparations for Dorothea's journey; glad to have all her children once more about her; and Steenie's health occupied her mind much. If she thought at all of her little bit of worldliness, it was to feel ashamed of it.

She had heard nothing of Mr. Grenfell, and looked upon her idea concerning him as a folly which she wished to forget.

So a few days passed all in a bustle; then Dorothea was gone, and Mabel began

to steel herself to endure the drudgery of the dull winter which she believed to loom before her. But she had not yet gauged the amount of pain which she must suffer.

A letter from Sir Theophilus to her father arrived, which betrayed all her secret trouble; made patent to her family all which her maidenly reserve would have kept to herself; hurt her excessively; and aroused the strongest indignation in Mr. Selby.

In cold and formal language, this letter announced that Sir Theophilus and Lady Sarah Grenfell were much surprised and deeply displeased to receive a request from their son for sanction to his addresses to Miss Selby. This was so improper a desire upon his part as caused them to regret the influences under which he had fallen during the last few months. They had thought better of Miss Selby than to

suspect her of carrying on such an affair in an underhand manner, while receiving so much kindness in their house; and it begged Mr. Selby to be assured that any further connection between the young people must be regarded as wholly impossible.

A bomb-shell falling among them could hardly have caused the Selbys greater consternation.

Mabel was pained to the very heart's core. She felt that she deserved better treatment; she had been loyal and true to her host and hostess through the whole business; her conscience acquitted her of all dishonourable conduct. She had not sought Mr. Grenfell's society: his attachment was wholly spontaneous on his own part; he had made her love him, but she had struggled against her fate with all her might, and fled when that fate became too strong for her.

And she had grown so fond of Charles' father. He was not like her own father, he never could be that; she regarded him in her strong young nature somewhat as she might have looked upon a child, and loved him as such. She was tender towards him, loved to please him, and thought that he had grown fond of her.

How could he ever have written of her so? How could he be so cold at heart yet so pleasant of tongue?

Had this letter come from Lady Sarah, Mabel would have been neither so much surprised nor so deeply wounded; but this was a bolt from the blue.

Her own father, at first, added to her pain. In a towering passion, he flung the letter across the table to her, almost shouting: 'What does all this mean, Mabel? What have you been about?'

'Frank, my dear!' exclaimed his wife, in astonished remonstrance.

'Read that yourself, wife,' cried he, in somewhat cooler tones.

Mrs. Selby came round to her daughter, and passed her arm about her shoulders, as the girl bowed her head upon her hands, and cried bitterly.

'Sir Theophilus should not have written so,' sobbed she. 'I refused Mr. Grenfell.'

'What?' said her mother. 'Did he make you an offer?'

'Yes, mother, and I said no,' whispered she, in a voice hardly to be heard for shamefacedness and sorrow.

Mrs. Selby looked at her husband.

'Was this the reason why you wanted so much to come home, my dear?' asked she.

'Yes, mamma, I was afraid of it, and hoped to prevent it.'

'But he actually made you an offer of marriage, my dear?'

'Yes, and I said no, but he would not take no for an answer.'

'Tell me, Mabel,' said her father. 'Do you like this young man?'

She sobbed afresh for all answer.

'Did you let him suspect that you liked him at heart?'

'I don't know, father. I tried not.'

Frank exonerated her from that moment, but the current of his wrath turned yet more fiercely upon Sir Theophilus.

He flung out of the room, and wrote an answer to the baronet dictated by all the heat of his impulsive nature.

This answer was perhaps a natural one, but not wise. Let us follow it to Tregarthen; or, rather, let us return there for the history of what followed upon the interview of Charles with his parents, and how Sir Theophilus came to launch so uncalled-for an affront upon Mr. Selby and Mabel.

Charles, persistent in character, tried his best to induce his father and mother to give their consent to his attachment. They had never thwarted him before, and he did not believe that he should not prevail upon them now to permit him to take his own way.

Like the bishop in the Bab Ballads, he 'argued high, he argued low; he, also, argued all about him,' but with no effect.

His father, certainly, gradually began to be somewhat influenced by him, but not so his mother, who proved perfectly immovable, and who sternly repressed all timid overtures of peace ventured upon by Sir Theophilus.

Lady Sarah utterly refused to discuss this matter with her son. He was like a child, crying for the moon, and must be silenced by authority. But she knew that Sir Theophilus had a persuadable temper,

and considered it advisable to keep him up in private to stern implacability.

When, therefore, they were alone, she spoke of their son's desire with strong reprehension, blaming poor Mabel, as most mothers of her class would, for having tried to entrap the heir, and regretting much that she had not fathomed her duplicity at once.

'But do not allow Charles to suppose for a moment that we will yield. Be inflexible, my dear Sir Theophilus, from the first, and we shall soon put it out of his head. There is nothing like crushing these fancies in the bud.'

'Yes, my dear, you are right: doubtless you are right. But there is something more to be thought of. Things are not always one-sided you see, not always, no, not always. We Grenfells have strong feelings upon some points, and caution must be observed in crossing them.'

Lady Sarah was not aware of the existence of any feeling in her husband which could arouse danger were it crossed. But, perhaps, she had never fully understood him. She had married the estate more than the man; and it might be that Sir Theophilus had missed a something all through his life which had rendered him softer towards his son's wishes now.

But it was not of himself that he was thinking at this juncture.

'This makes me think of my eldest brother, Sarah. My eldest brother, who was thwarted over a love affair, and died before the year was out. Charles seems to take this just as hard as his forbear did; and this girl has nothing against her character as that one had, neither is there as much against her position. A nice girl, a very nice girl is this one, and a pretty young creature.'

'I quite fail to see how the one story

applies to the other, Sir Theophilus.'

'Why, my dear, the thing is plain. My poor brother took his love affair hardly; and, when my father stopped it with a high hand, he seemed to lose all interest in life, and disease, I suppose, took hold of him.'

'Our boy is made of stronger stuff than that. There are no signs of consumption in him.'

'None had appeared in my brother before.'

'Our boy is healthy enough, I tell you, Sir Theophilus.'

'Consumption has shown itself sadly enough among poor Diana's children.'

'Yes, but it is rife among the Courtneys. The children inherit it from that side. There is none in my family. Not a Vane among us ever suffered in that manner.'

'It may be so, but my poor brother's story should be a caution to us to deal

gently with our boy, and not be harsh to him in our turn.'

'Perhaps, perhaps. No one wants to be harsh with him, dear romantic fellow. But this is preposterous,' said Lady Sarah. 'I will tell you what, Sir Theophilus. If you have such a dislike to speaking decidedly and strongly to Charles himself,—which is, maybe, wise, for it might only arouse his obstinacy, instead of doing any good,—why not write to the girl's father, and tell him that no engagement could be sanctioned by us?'

'Well,' said Sir Theophilus, doubtfully, for he felt that he should hate the task, yet he was willing to please his wife as far as might be. 'Well, it may be the best thing to do.'

But the letter was a more difficult one to indite than he anticipated. Gladly would he have abandoned the business, after several trials, had not Lady Sarah

kept him up to it; and, finally, taken forcible possession of one discarded attempt to express himself, which he liked even worse than any other.

She put it into an envelope, and sealed it herself.

'My dear Sir Theophilus,' said she, 'when a disagreeable thing has to be said, nothing can make it into a pleasant one. It is too bad of Charles to have put us into this position, but we must face it now, and there is no use in hair-splitting. That letter will do as well as if you rewrote it fifty times. And now that it has gone, and Charles is at Oxford, and everything very dull here, suppose you and I run over to Baden, or somewhere, for a few weeks till this has blown over. A change will do both of us good, and I feel uncomfortable whenever I see Rose Selby, though I do not believe that she knows anything about this affair.'

Charles had proceeded to Oxford, and Sir Theophilus was thankful for his wife's proposal. Preparations were set on foot at once, and they left Tregarthen at the end of the week; but before they went—indeed by return of post—arrived Mr. Selby's letter.

'Dear Sir,

'You have done me the unsolicited favour of writing to me to refuse your sanction to your son's proposal of marriage with my daughter Perhaps, sir, you would have acted more courteously, if not more wisely, had you waited to know whether the honour were desired. Young ladies do not generally publish at the market-cross proposals which they have declined to entertain, but my daughter, being on terms of perfect confidence with her mother and myself, informed us of what has passed; and, had she not coupled

the announcement with that of her refusal of Mr. Grenfell, I should ere now have taken the initiative myself, by writing to say that I disapprove of the match in the most decided manner. My reasons for this are wholly unconnected with Mr. Grenfell himself, of whom I think highly, and to whom, personally, I am attached with bonds of gratitude and warm friendship; but I have ever noticed that marriages between people of unequal social status result in unhappiness for the lady.

'A marriage with your son would separate us from the daughter we love, expose her to the cold charities of ladies who would not be her friends, and tend in other ways to her misery. Viewing it in this light, as I do, you need fear no advances on our part, nor will it be necessary for any further communication to pass between us.

'With many thanks for kindness and favours past, believe me, sir, to be

'Ever yours faithfully,

'FRANCIS SELBY.'

Frank Selby had called himself perfectly calm when he wrote this letter, but he was really in a consuming rage. He was as proud a man as Sir Theophilus himself; —in fact, far prouder. The Selbys were not of a distinguished family, but one of the highest respectability for generations. There was no family estate in the background, no title, no name of note, but they were middle-class gentry, clergymen, officers, and merchants of repute. He himself, though not a Royal Academician, stood well for that honour, which could not be far off; and, in the meantime, he maintained and educated his children as ladies and gentlemen. He regarded Sir

Theophilus Grenfell's letter as an affront of the most insolent character,—one which he could not forgive. He had not sought these people—he had not desired their acquaintance;—they had come of their own accord, uninvited, undesired,—obtruded themselves into his privacy,—and, as he thought, been civil, out of their abundance, of that which cost them nothing. Circumstances had done the rest.

If young Grenfell had the good taste to perceive his daughters' superiority to other girls,—their talents, their beauty, their fresh innocent girlishness, so graceful, so charming;— why, what could be more natural? But for this haughty old baronet to think that he would part with his sweet young child to be lost to them, to be separated from them almost as much as if she were dead; to be unappreciated, slighted, despised;—to be blamed for plotting and planning this; to be sup-

posed desirous of foisting his daughter upon a family who wanted her not, and regarded the connection as a disgrace;—all this was gall and wormwood to him.

He repented bitterly of having allowed the stream of events to carry him along on its tide; of having accepted favours so evidently offered from *de haut en bas*; of having, unwarily, put himself into the position of an inferior, a dependent upon these people's bounty.

His tender heart bled to notice the evident wound which that of his daughter had received. He heard the tremble in her voice as she said, 'I thought it only honourable to refuse him under the circumstances, father.' He perceived the emotion bravely kept in check, the eyes full of tears which were resolutely not permitted to fall; he watched the sweetness with which, the communication once made, the girl set herself to her duties; to tending her in-

valid brother; teaching her little sister; waiting on her mother; being his own cherished friend and companion; and, by gentle ministry to all, keeping her own sorrows to herself, nor letting them sadden the family; and, the more he respected and loved her, the more he considered that the Grenfells had lost a jewel which would have been cheaply bought with all their wealth.

And to have this precious jewel slighted;—to ignore the consideration for their pride which had led to her own unselfish self-sacrifice;—to have their ignorance regard her as unworthy, inferior to themselves to such a degree as make them gratuitously pile this indignity upon her;—caused even Frank Selby's easy, genial soul to boil within him in wrath.

Mrs. Selby shared these feelings in a gentler spirit, but with a mixture of self-reproach for having perceived the affair in

its earlier stages, and done her little best to further what she supposed would have been to her daughter's advantage. In her simple singleness of heart she had only thought of the attachment, not of the young man's position; further than as a prosperous one, there need be no long weary waiting for means upon which to marry, and no hard struggle for comfort when the marriage took place.

Her husband's profession and growing reputation had caused her to meet occasionally with people of greater rank and higher social position than the Grenfells; people with historic names, which would live for ever in the world's records. Connection with such people she valued highly, she knew well enough how to rank *them*, and thought much of receiving notice or kindness from them.

If one of her husband's pictures went into the private collection of a great

politician, a military hero, a famous literary man, she was mightily pleased; she would accept an invitation to some large party from such ladies as their wives, when Frank and she received a card, for there was no question of returning that hospitality, and suitable dress need not be costly.

On occasions when, surrounded by some among her pretty tribe of children, she happened to encounter these great people in the rooms of the Academy, or other public place, and they stopped to speak, and to compliment her upon her husband's work and her children's beauty, she would blush and dimple all over her own sweet face, and retail their civility afterwards to Frank with sinful exultation, for which he would gaily laugh at her.

Her utter want of presumption and self-assertion had never necessitated a rebuff, and she had never received one.

In her eyes, these Grenfells were only

rich, not great. None of them had ever done anything worth talking about, nothing for their country, nothing to create admiration or respect. She had often smiled to herself upon observing the veneration with which her sisters-in-law regarded them; she had attributed this to the Miss Selbys' retired life and ignorance of the world. She was wholly unable to estimate the exaggerated views of their own consequence acquired by people who live in a narrow circle where their wealth gives them consideration, and who never mix with their superiors, or measure themselves with those of greater note.

Accordingly, she looked upon their attentions with far different eyes from those with which they themselves contemplated them. She did not understand them as patronage, and believed that her young people gave a very sufficient *quid pro quo* for the kindness offered to them. She,

therefore, felt the slight as totally undeserved—as a wanton cruelty; and was sore about it in proportion.

'You are a wise girl to have acted as you have done, my dear,' she said. 'The acquaintance is entirely closed now, and you shall be annoyed no more by this unpleasant affair.'

Mabel made a quiet assent, but she knew in her heart of hearts that the matter would not end here.

Did she quite wish that it should?

CHAPTER V.

ROSEWARNE VISITS MRS. SELBY.

Cornish people are proverbially clannish, their motto of 'One and all' means more to them than a mere phrase. The spirit which made twenty thousand Cornishmen determine, with one accord, to know the reason why a bishop of their race should be put to death without due cause is still extant under many a diverse form, and long may it continue to be so.

In a central part of the great city of London is an hotel well known to all Cornishmen, who invariably gravitate

there sooner or later, for one cause or another, when in town. It is a saying among them that one cannot walk twice along the busy thoroughfare in which it is situated, without meeting some one from 'home.'

At one time, in this hotel, a barmaid from Withiel was a prominent and popular figure. 'Nancy' was liked by all; her plump, good-humoured, homely face proved a welcome sight to many a man; her hearty voice and provincial accent a welcome sound. She may almost be said to have made the reputation of this house among the West of England people.

Nancy was a Rosewarne, a cousin of Rosewarne of Trecotherick; and, as such, an acquaintance of Frank Selby from the earliest days of his residence in London. If business took him to the city, he always dropped in to Carthew's Hotel for a glass of cider and a chat with Nancy, who

dearly loved a joke, and much appreciated 'Mr. Frank's' attentions.

Years before the opening of this story, his handsome, good-humoured face appeared one dreadful winter's day, out of the fog, and snow, and slush, outside, into the bright cheeriness of the bar.

Part of the regular enjoyment of these calls of his was to talk Cornish dialect of the broadest with the barmaid, who looked upon this as a facetiousness of the most exquisite description.

'Well, Nancy soce,' quoth he, 'how be?'

'Cri gemini, Maister Frank, be that you? Why you'm stratted from head to foot, chield! How do 'ee fadgy?'

'Most a wored out, Nancy. Do 'ee teem me out a drop of dufflin cider, there's a dear maid.'

'That's but cold old trade for your innards such a gashly day as 'tis, my dear

life. Have a drap of Plymouth gin, hot, 't will be the best for 'ee.'

'Well, ef 'ee du tell me to, I must, I reckon.'

'And how be all the volks up to Withiel Churchtown, maister?' asked Nancy, bustling about to prepare the cordial, as Frank made his way into the bar, with the familiarity of old acquaintance.

A man was sitting by the chimney-corner, smoking a pipe; he rose, and civilly made room for the new-comer, taking an opportunity of asking, in a low voice,

'Who is he, Nance?'

'Why,' said she, '''ee doant tell as 'ee doant know Maister Frank, the ould passon's son up to Churchtown? A's living up here now, a' is. 'Tis my cousin Sam Rosewarne from Trecotherick, Maister Frank.'

Frank greeted the man in his pleasant

cheery way, asked if he would not join him in a glass of gin punch this dismal day, for the sake of old neighbourhood, and enquired where he had been this long time. Nancy answered for him.

'He've been abroad,' said she. 'The old hunks of a barrownite wouldn't let him have the lease of Trecotherick say all a could, and a couldn't bear to see strangers in the old place, so a cum up here, and hev roamed about like an uneasy sperit.'

'She tells true, sir,' said the man. 'I come home when I heard say as how Sir Charles was dead, hoping to get the place yet, for I'm mightily set upon it, but 'tis let for a long run of years.'

Frank Selby knew the whole story as much as the Cornish world knew it, and thought that Rosewarne had been hardly dealt with. He said as much to him, and

the man, warming under the influence of sympathy, said that he had made up his mind to settle now in a public-house which was to be let at the back of St. James's Square, hoping for custom among the Withiel men-servants in the Grenfells' employment.

'Twouldn't be so wisht, sir; if one could pass a word now and then with volk as knowed me afore; and there's a good few West Country men, up and down, round there; who'd like to have a Cornish house to come to. 'Iss fy, that they would; but I be, someways, in the Withiel lawyers' black books. 'Tis the baronet's doings, I knaw, an ungrateful old hunks. I'd let him see whether I'd put up with his spite, but for my old mawther, who thinks such a heap of 'un. They could make it hot for she if they liked, so I hold my tongue.'

'Yes, yes, never vex a good mother. I

know your mother, she has been a good mother to you, Rosewarne, and has had her troubles.'

'Ah! that hur have, more nor most du know of. But the baronet don't want me in that house; and there's nary another that suits me so well, to be had. 'Tain't his house nother. I don't want to be his tenant; but the trustee for this property wants a good reference afore he'll have me, and I've been abroad so long that I've none to offer that he'll take; and Sir Theophilus won't give me one, nor let his agent give one. A nasty cantankerous old fellow! I be most daunted.'

Frank had a long talk with the man; sought Nancy in private afterwards; and asked her plainly whether there were anything against her cousin's character to justify the baronet's conduct.

Nancy, proud to be consulted by 'Mr. Frank,' in earnest, and glad to have the

chance of doing her cousin a good turn, threw herself, heart and soul, into the matter. There was nothing at all against Rosewarne, he had means, and was likely to conduct the house reputably.

'Tes all pride, zur, that a' be. 'Tes all because of that old story of Sam's sister and Mr. Charles. Their pride cannot abear to think on it. 'Taint naught else.'

Mr. Selby thought so, too. He saw the trustee for the property; made himself responsible for Rosewarne, and secured for him the lease of the public-house.

The man never forgot this timely kindness; nor did Nancy.

Time only strengthened the bonds between them. Sam Rosewarne's wife was a Withiel woman, and their only child, a daughter, was afflicted with a spinal complaint, which made her a great sufferer.

She was frequently indebted to the kind-

hearted Frank and to Mrs. Selby for such little attentions as money cannot buy. Did the Miss Selbys send up a hamper of Cornish dainties, some of the cream, or other nice things with a flavour of 'home,' were sure to be sent to poor Thomasine; amusing books were lent to her, and patterns for fancy-work, etc. Nurse was generally the bearer of these thoughtful attentions, and enjoyed a reflected light of goodwill from the brilliance of estimation in which her master and mistress were held.

Mrs. Rosewarne, a decent managing woman, with friends in the neighbourhood of Polzeath, was the most intimate friend whom nurse possessed, and they often exchanged visits, Nancy frequently forming one of the party. It was through these people that Mr. Selby had learnt that the house at Polzeath was to be hired; and it was a sister of Mrs. Rosewarne with whom

nurse had gone to drink tea, on the memorable occasion when Steenie upset the donkey-cart.

Nancy was no longer barmaid at the hotel. Long before had she retired upon her well-earned laurels and savings, to set up a business of her own as a private hotel-keeper in Buckingham Street, whence regular relays of young servants, having been had up from Cornwall, and trained into excellent domestics, were placed out in turn into the establishments of Mrs. Rosewarne's many clients, who always came to her when in need of such persons.

The Selbys had not long returned to town, before nurse was invited to tea by Mrs. Sam Rosewarne, to meet Nancy, and to enjoy a chat over Cornish news.

It was a dreary November day outside, but the parlour behind the bar looked all the more cosy by contrast. The tea was brewed, muffins keeping hot on a little

stool before the fire, a smell of savoury cooking pervaded the air, and a bright copper kettle singing on the hob suggested the idea of something comfortable to follow. Nurse was by no means insensible to creature comforts, and a bland expression crossed her face upon taking note of all these preparations in her honour. She set herself with goodwill to do them justice, and to enjoy a gossip at the same time.

Thomasine sat by the fire, knitting, and nurse handed her a parcel.

'Miss Mabel sent it to you, Tam'son,' said she. ''Tis a new pattern for patchwork that she saw when she was staying at Tregarthen, and thought you would like.'

'Miss Mabel never forgets me,' said the cripple, colouring with pleasure.

'And how is the poor little gentleman?' asked Mrs. Rosewarne. 'We *were* sorry to

hear of his misfortune, pretty little dear. The captain took to him mightily; he said he couldn't ha' been more put about if he were his own grandson.'

'And Master Steenie took to him just as much. The very first day that he was wheeled out in his chair after he came home, he must needs buy a china pig and litter of young ones that he saw in a shop, and send to him, because they minded him of the captain's old sow.'

'Little dear!' ejaculated Nancy. 'But they'm all alike, so free and good-natured, just like their pa.'

'Sister wrote to me about your going there, and how the poor little gentleman upset 'ee out of the donkey-cart,' said Mrs. Rosewarne.

'Ah!' said nurse, ''twas as if we'd been overlooked from that day on. We've had naught but trouble since. There was that, and then losing the little 'uns next day,

and then Master Steenie being so ill, and then, to wind up all, there's Miss Mabel's affair.'

'Miss Mabel!'

'Ay, Miss Mabel. That there young Grenfell and she must take to each other. He's a nice young gentleman, I must say; —they'd make a pretty pair. I seed how it were from the first, he always a-riding over with excuses to know how Master Steenie was. I saw through that, plain enough, without spectacles, and small wonder. But what Sir Theophilus and his ma want, it beats me to say, when they come to pass Miss May over, and say she's not good enough for their fine son.'

'Not good enough? Miss Mabel!' cried the hearers, in great incredulity.

'Like their cursed pride!' growled Sam. ''Tis not the first as they've looked on like dirt beneath their feet. But pride can have a fall!'

'Sam's thinking of his poor sister Tamson,' said his wife, as the landlord was called away here. 'He set a sight of store by her, and she were a pretty soul, they say.'

Nurse had not a clear understanding of the story, and Mrs. Rosewarne proceeded to relate it, as she had heard it from the Rosewarne side.

'They were but the two of them, and he can't bear to hear the name of Grenfell ever since.'

'Do you remember his sister?' asked nurse.

'Not I. I don't mind whether I ever saw her or no. Sam and I didn't come together, you know, till he settled down here, and she was dead then.'

'Dead! Ah, poor soul!'

'Yes, she died somewhere up to foreign parts. Sam never settled till after that. He would have our maid here christened Tamson after her when she was born, and

maybe 'tis as well that things is as they is with her, poor maid. Her aunt's pretty face didn't bring her much luck.'

'Nor Miss Mabel's don't neither,' said nurse. 'I've no patience with they there folks, thinking so much of theirselves.'

Servants usually know the affairs of their masters and mistresses pretty well, and nurse was not the most discreet or reticent of women. Her friends' warm sympathy unlocked her heart, and she related all that she knew, and all that she suspected, of Miss Selby's love affair, to her eager listeners. Sam Rosewarne returned, and waxed very wroth upon the subject of the baronet's pride. It did not take much to set him going on this topic. First one anecdote and then another was related; and, by the time that nurse rose to go home, the Grenfells' characters were made to look very dark to Miss Selby's enthusiastic admirers.

'Tis all along of the young gentleman being the heir,' said Sam. 'I know their ways and their notions. That there big place is like a mill-stone about their necks. They set it up like to a heathen image to kneel down to and worship. Just so soon as any one of them comes to have it for their own, it pisons all the good there is in 'em. But they'd better have a mind. There may be others with as good a right to their pride as they.'

'Ah! there is so,' said nurse, thinking of her young mistress. But Sam Rosewarne was not thinking of Miss Selby.

Just as nurse had her bonnet on to return home, she bethought her of a message which her master had sent to Sam, when he had heard where she was going.

'Ask Sam Rosewarne,' said he, 'if he doesn't know where to lay his hand upon some Italian men and girls who would sit to me for my new picture. Last time I

was at his place I saw a very good-looking young fellow there who is just what I want. Sam seemed to know him. If he could spare time to come up one day, and smoke a pipe with me, I would show him the sketches I have made, and he would understand what I am looking out for. Don't forget to ask him, nurse.'

'And I was just about to walk off without saying a word,' cried she.

'I'll look up Thursday afternoon,' said Sam. 'Give my duty to maister, and tell him so. Thursday afternoon.'

'All right,' said nurse; and went away.

On Thursday, Sam appeared in the studio, according to engagement, and was heartily greeted by Mr. Selby, though he did not seem to be quite in his usual good spirits.

''Ee doant seem to be just the thing, sir,' said Sam.

'Oh! I'm well enough,' said Mr. Selby.

'There is rather a tiresome affair worrying me just now a little, that's all. I have been seeing a person on business connected with it just before you came in. But see, Sam, there's nothing like work, you know, to put vexations out of one's mind. Here are my sketches. You know the old story of Saxon children being sold as slaves in Rome, and the good people there thinking them angels. It occurred to me that these young plagues of mine would serve admirably for the group of slaves, and I would pose them something after this fashion, though this is only the first rough idea.'

He brought out a sketch of Mabel, seated upon a block of stone, looking out of the picture with eyes in which the tears were ready to overflow. Steenie was on her knee, clasped by one arm to her breast, delicate, lovely, and clinging to her; while, with the other hand, she caught Amanda

back from the grasp of a swarthy powerful Roman soldier.

It was a suggestive sketch, and very lovely.

There was another group of Felicia and Evangeline, with the twins, all manacled, and Amanda in another position. A third showed Amanda, in innocent unconsciousness of what was befalling her, playing with the plumes on the helmet of a Roman soldier, while Mabel, distraught with terror and supplication, caught hold, in agony, of the hand that was outstretched to seize the child.

'You see now, Sam, what I want are models of true Romans,—men, women, and children,—any sort of figures that would be likely to have been seen in the Roman forum. The greater the contrast to these fair-haired young sinners of mine, the better. Can you find me any? I saw a fellow at your place one day that was just

the man I want. I would paint him, if you could catch him for me, glowering down on Mabel here. Do you remember who it was?'

'I do so, sir, but I can't get him for you, I fear. I could find some models, I think; there is a lad who has nothing to do just at present, and would be glad enough to earn a few shillings by standing for you, and he's got a sister. She's a respectable girl, sir; she wouldn't be a model to any young raff of a student, but with you, Maister Frank, she'll be safe enough.'

'Safe as one of my own girls, Sam,' said Frank, laughing. 'Indeed she would, most likely, be posed among them if she turns out what I want. I hoped that you could help me.'

'I'll send them up to you, sir. Do you want costume for them?'

'Well, if they have their own native

dress, let them bring it, but I can do without that. Their colours may not be just right, or else the true thing is always best. Now you shall see my sketches of dear old Cornwall. Ah! Sam, the old county has served me but scurvily this time, yet how full of beauty it is!'

'It is so, sir. Ah! you've got Sinking Neddy Church, I see.'

'Yes, and you know this place, and this?' showing his sketches.

While Sam was in Mr. Selby's studio, his wife, who had accompanied him, had been talking to nurse in her domains.

'Tamson has been wanting this long time to do a bit of work for Miss Mabel, as has thought of her so often. She has got it done at last, and I made free to bring it for her, if she would not think it a liberty of the maid.'

Thomasine worked well, and her gift

consisted of some strips of art embroidery in delicate silks, suitable for trimming a gown, and beautifully finished.

'My word!' cried nurse, 'but Tamson has fingers! It is lovely! Poor Miss May, she will be pleased, but is not likely to have much heart for it to-day. Mr. Grenfell, he've been here, raving and storming this morning, and she has been crying her dear eyes out. Perhaps it may give a turn to her thoughts, though.'

'Don't bother her about such nonsense. It can wait well enough. Tamson won't mind, for a coorse we didn't know nothing about un.'

'Hush! Here she is!'

Mabel, in fact, came into the nursery at this moment, with some work which she had just completed. She was looking white, and her eyes were heavy.

'Here is Amy's pinafore, nurse,' said she. 'Please give me another. How do

you do, Mrs. Rosewarne? It is a nice day for the time of year, is it not?'

'Look here, my pretty, what Tamson Rosewarne has been making for you. Ain't that pretty?'

'How kind of her! How very pretty, and so beautifully worked!' said Mabel, in her gentle voice. 'Will you kindly tell her how much obliged I am to her, Mrs. Rosewarne. I will write a note to thank her myself to-morrow; but perhaps she will excuse my doing so at once, for I have a bad headache.'

But she stayed to examine the work, and praise it duly, and to send messages, lest the poor girl should be disappointed.

That she did this while so evidently in trouble, warmed the worthy woman's heart to her almost to overflowing. She told her husband about it on their way home.

'That was it, wor it?' cried he. 'I seed something was up, for Maister Frank

was looking wambly; and, sez he, sommut has been worrying me, he sez. D——n that old baronet, he's as great a fool as his father was before him.'

'Mrs. Brown saith as how the young man is different, and very nice.'

'They'm all tarred with the same brush, you may build on that. Our Miss Mabel is too good for them, that's a fact.'

'Ah! poor dear, 'tis a shame, that it is.'

'I wonder what it was all about?' said Mrs. Rosewarne. 'Nurse saith Mr. Grenfell were a-raving and a-storming. Can they have quarrelled?'

'Perhaps Maister Frank gave him a piece of his mind. Ef I thought as how anything was likely to come about between Miss Mabel and that there chap, I'd put a spoke in his wheel myself. He's naught but a gingerbread sort of a king, any way. I could take the gilt off from him when-

ever I please; and it would sarve him right if I did, for slighting Miss Mabel. She's too good for him by half.'

'Ah! you should just have seen her poor eyes so heavy, and her pretty cheeks so white. It went to my heart, that it did.'

'One could only touch them through their pockets; but I can do that, now mother's gone. I'd have done it long before, only for she. There's naught to hinder me now. I only wonder why I have been shilly-shallying about it so long, for I've got the train all laid; it only wants the match put to it to make a pretty flare-up among them.'

'Why, Sam, what could you do?'

'Never you mind. You ask no questions, and you'll be telled no lies. I've always meant to have my revenge upon they there proud devils for ruining of my

poor sister, and I'll take it, too, before they shall have the chance of treating Miss Mabel the same.'

'Don't burn your own fingers, Sam.'

'Not I. I know what I'm about, don't you fear.'

CHAPTER VI.

MARRIAGE PROPOSALS.

NURSE had said truly that Charles Grenfell had been in their house, causing much disturbance in the breasts of several of the inmates. For this, Horace might bear the blame.

Lady Sarah did not intend to allow her son any knowledge of his father's correspondence with Mr. Selby; but, as soon as his parents were gone to Baden, the young man came up to town upon a flying visit, wholly unable to bear longer the utter dearth of all knowledge of Mabel.

He called upon Horace;—he had never quarrelled with Horace, why should he? It was only ordinary civility for him to call upon Horace. So he called, and found his friend at home.

Horace, on his side, had no idea of not keeping up his friendship with Charles. He was Miss Courtney's cousin; and Horace, —alas for his peace of mind!—thought far more of Miss Courtney than was good for him. His sister Dorothea had been accurate enough in her observations upon him, but even she had not seen all that had gone on.

Horace knew well enough that Augusta was intended to marry the young heir; but, as long as the heir himself was so set upon other counsels, he was safe from that; and he, therefore, felt double interest in his sister's affairs, and gave her away at once, in the most shameless manner, at the first word.

'I suppose you know,' said Charles, 'something of what has passed between your sister and myself, don't you, Horace?'

'I don't think you could tell me much more,' replied the careful brother. 'I say, it was rather too bad of your governor to write to mine as he did, though.'

'Write to him! Why, what did he write about?'

'Didn't you know? Oh! he wrote a furious denunciation of us all. I did not see the letter, but father was in a pretty way about it; and, as far as I could make out, gave him something to digest, by way of reply. So he told me, at any rate.'

'I didn't know of that,' said Charles. 'It was too bad to steal a march upon me, behind my back, like that. But, Horace, you will stick to me, won't you?'

'Like a brother,' replied Horace, with earnestness which quite touched his friend.

'You see,' he proceeded, 'it is not so much

the dear old dad's fault. If I only had a fair field, I could soon settle *him*. He is very fond of your sister, really. I know he is. A very short time would make him come into my views; but he has a firebrand in his counsels, and dare not tackle it. All the blood of all the Vanes is up in commotion, Horace.'

'Well,' said Horace, 'Mabel will play them fair. She has got it into her head that it is honourable to keep you at your distance, and Lady Sarah need not be afraid. The Duchess has no end of pluck, you know. Her room is next to mine, and the partition is very thin. A few nights ago, I heard suspicious little sniffs going on 'tother side of the sweet and lovely wall, until I could stand it no longer, and I got up, and went to her door, pretending I wanted some toothache stuff. She was there, crying all by herself in the dark, at two o'clock in the morning, but she

has never shed a tear in full face of day.'

Charles groaned.

'I *must* see her, Horace! Flesh and blood cannot stand this, you know! Manage for me to see her if only for a few minutes. I must tell her that I don't care a hang for the Vanes and their notions.'

'It will do no good,' said Horace. 'You don't know the Duchess as well as I. She'll never give in once she has taken the bit between her teeth. Why, I tried to comfort her that night, fetched her eau-de-Cologne, and was for kissing her, and telling her to cheer up; and she would have it that she was not crying at all. "I had only got the cramp in my big toe,"' mimicked the brother, half-laughing. 'Little fibber, and her face was all hot and wet, and her handkerchief soaked with mopping it up.'

'Oh! that I had been there,' sighed

Charles. 'Horace! I *will* see her, I won't go back to Oxford till I do.'

'If you will, you will, one may depend on 't,' said Horace. 'Come along.'

He led the way, and opened the door of the school-room where, the 'middle aged' being at their respective educational establishments, his sister was imparting instruction to Steenie and Amanda. He took Steenie up in his arms, and muttering something about the children being wanted, marched off with them, and shut his friend up alone with Mabel in their place.

What passed between them was never told. The children's voices at play in unhallowed hours attracted their mother's attention, and all came out. Mrs. Selby went to her husband, and he walked straight into the school-room.

Charles, flushed, eager, vehement, had hold of Mabel's hand, and was pleading

with all the eloquence he could summon; she was trying to pull her hand away, her face was averted, and tears running down it. At sight of her father, she wrenched her fingers from her lover's clasp, fled to his arm for refuge, and wept upon his shoulder.

Mr. Selby held her very close to him, and warded the young man off by a decided gesture.

'Mr. Grenfell,' said he, 'we must have no more of this.'

Charles began to pour out a flood of incoherent words, but Mr. Selby interrupted him.

'My dear sir,' said he, 'you evidently do not gather the correct state of the case. I wholly object to any engagement between you and my daughter. I will not sanction it in any way. She has already declined the honour which you have proposed to her; and please to understand

that she has done so with my unqualified approval.'

Charles tried to put in some eager words, but Mr. Selby would not hear him. He raised his voice, and quite drowned that of the younger man.

'I will not have my daughter importuned by you, or insulted by your father. She has given you a refusal, and you must abide by it for once and for all.'

'Mr. Selby! it is you who do not understand the position, not I. Miss Selby refuses me at present, I admit; but, as she has just confessed that she loves me, you cannot suppose that I shall take her no for an answer, if all the fathers in creation were to object.'

Charles' eyes were radiant with triumph. He tasted to the full the delight he felt in thus turning the tables upon Mr. Selby, and stood erect and glowing before the perplexed parent, who could not help ad-

miring and liking the young fellow as he defied him to his face.

'It makes no difference, father,' murmured Mabel.

'It makes *all* the difference, sir,' said Charles, firmly.

Mr. Selby was in difficulty as to what to say. He blundered. He began, boldly, 'I cannot allow anything of the sort;' he ended, feebly, 'You are both too young.'

Charles pounced upon the admission conveyed.

'That hindrance will lessen every day, sir. Is that my chief obstacle in your eyes? Do you entertain any personal objection to me?'

Who could have entertained any personal objection to the gallant lad, standing there glowing with love and pride? Frank could not;—poor, easy-tempered, kindly Frank, with his impulsive temper and tender heart.

'No, no, my boy,' cried he, hastily.

'That is well, sir,' said the young man, coming forward, and once more taking Mabel's hand. He would have released her from her father's arm, and taken her to his own keeping, but she resisted, and the moment for reflection recalled Frank's common sense.

'But look here, Grenfell. All this does not alter things one iota. Mabel is no wife for you.'

'She is the only wife I will ever have, sir.'

'Nonsense, nonsense. You will think very differently in a few years, and be glad that there were wiser people in the world than you.'

'There may be wiser ones, sir, though as to this matter I doubt it But there are none truer or more in earnest.'

'Pooh, pooh. You are but children. Now look here. I do not approve of

this, I do not think Mabel suited to you or to the life she would have to lead with you. You will probably think so too when you have seen more of the world. There must be no engagement between you, no understanding of any kind, implied or not. You are both to be perfectly free; but if, when you have finished your college course, you are in the same mind, and can come to me and show that it has been run creditably;—well, I will consider it again. But no meetings, no letters, no encouragement of any sort, kind, or description must be allowed.'

'I accept your terms, sir,' cried Charles, joyfully. 'I accept them readily. I would serve as Jacob did, for your daughter.' He turned to her, and bent down over her, trying once more to take her hand. 'Mabel!' said he, in a voice of the greatest tenderness.

But Mabel would not speak, would not

look up, would make no sign. Only a little involuntary sob betrayed her. He patted her gently on the shoulder.

'I will not distress you, my dearest,' he said, 'but understand me. I take your father's word; and, strong in the belief of your love, I shall go and work to make myself worthy of you. If you change your mind, I shall trust to your honour to tell me so plainly. As long as you are silent, I shall believe in the possession of your love until I come again. Meantime, I will try to be worthy of you.'

He bent his lips upon her bowed head, gave his hand to Selby, and walked out.

Mabel cried pitifully.

'Now, now, my dear, don't cry,' said her father. 'I don't wonder that you like that ridiculous boy. I do myself, I do indeed. There, go to your room, and your mother shall come to you.'

That panacea for all his own troubles

must be an equal comfort to his daughter, in Frank's estimation. He kissed the girl, and sent her upstairs.

His wife was watching anxiously to ask him how matters had fared. He shrugged his shoulders in his own insouciant fashion, saying,

'I'm a fool, wifie, and have conducted myself as sich. Go to her, there's a dear soul.' And he shut himself up in his studio, where he found his hand too shaky for work, so he lighted a pipe, and began to turn over canvases. But the pipe did not answer; he cast it aside, and paced the room up and down, thinking over the whole affair. Then he laughed, muttered to himself,

> 'Though father and mother and all should go mad,
> Oh, whistle, and I will come to you, my lad;'

sat down once more, and took up his pipe.

He was glad when Rosewarne came in,

and gave him an excuse for throwing down his brushes.

No more was heard of Charles, except that Horace and he corresponded rather frequently.

Horace was his father's next trouble. He went through the examination for the Indian Civil Service, and missed his appointment. The regulations were altered that year, the limit of age reduced, and he could not try again.

'You must go in for the Home Civil Service,' said his father.

'I would rather take to art, sir, if you have no objection.'

'Take to art! But, my boy, art is but a chancy mistress. Would it not be better to try for something certain, even if it do not lead to possible big prizes?'

'The Civil Service is such slow promotion, sir. One might be a greybeard before one could marry.'

'I think the devil has got into all the babies' cradles!' cried Frank. 'You must begin to talk of marriage now! My dear boy, *you* are not heir to an entail, please to remember.'

'No one knows that better than I, father, and that is why I want a quicker road to fortune than entering a public office, and waiting for dead men's shoes.'

'I think you are all in league together to drive me distracted,' exclaimed his father. 'I shall have Désirée to-morrow, I suppose, sitting up to receive her young man's proposals. Who may the fortunate lady be who has inspired you with this sudden ambition?'

'I never said there was a lady, sir,' said Horace, rather sulkily. 'I suppose, at my age, with my future career in question, I may take the possibility of wanting to marry some day into consideration among other contingencies.'

'Oh!' said Frank, looking at his son keenly. 'Marriage, as a possible contingency, may be considered, doubtless. But don't you be a regular ass, my boy. Keep the question an impersonal one for the next few years.'

'I am not likely to be able to make it a personal one, sir.'

'And you want to adopt art as a profession? You certainly have talents, and some training. You may succeed if you give your mind to it, but you must not serve two masters—or mistresses—there any more than elsewhere, if you mean success, Horace. Art is a jealous mistress, and admits no rival.'

'You married early upon art, sir.'

'You have marriage upon the brain, my boy. It is the consequence of suffering one romantic affair to be talked about. All of you take the infection, like measles over again. I wish it were measles, there

would be some end to that. But things were different with me. I had a small fortune, you have none. And I have not acquired the fame I might have made if I had not married so young. There may be better things than fame—that is a separate question—but fame certainly comes slowly when a man has to paint potboilers by the score to pay the butcher and baker. Potboilers hamper genius dreadfully; and if you marry without fortune, and trust to the income you make to live from hand to mouth, potboilers must be painted.'

'Father, you are not much over forty yet, and you will be an associate this year, an academician at the next vacancy, certainly. How many men earn the honour much earlier in life?'

'And how many men happen upon the luck of such a woman as your mother, if they do marry imprudently at the age we

did? I had luck, Horace, in lighting upon her. She was younger than your sister when we married, and how she has struggled with me and helped me, no one knows. No, Horace, such a career as mine has been could only have been run when a man has a woman such as she to back him up. Get a Civil Service appointment, and you have your means of living simply secure from the first, and the certainty of a fair income before you are my age. Should accident or illness floor me, what would become of you all yet? Your mother and I, between us, possessed enough income to pay the rent of a small house and to furnish it, after a fashion. That income, by her prudence and management, has become large enough to secure the rent of this one, and to keep us out of debt. Fortune has yet to come, and, as you say, I am over forty years of age—some years to the bad, too.'

'Father, I know it all; but what has been good enough for you will be good enough for me. If I have no fortune, I have a father who has already taught me much, and earned a reputation which is better than money for an inheritance. I am not hoping to marry yet. If you could give me house-room and help, I should do as well as in the Civil Service almost as soon.'

Much more was said. Frank did not like it, but Horace was determined, and carried his day. He was entered as a student, and set to work with vigour to master the details of his profession.

A strong, though silent, bond existed between him and Mabel—a bond that was strengthened much through Dorothea's absence—which put them a little apart from the younger ones. Felicia naturally came to consort more with Evangeline as they went backwards and forwards to

their High-school together. Similarity of scholastic interests and acquaintances drew them into the companionship of the twins, and the four were a little *coterie* to themselves.

Horace and Mabel, always about the house, were necessarily thrown together, and they walked together. If they talked of Charles, of Tregarthen, of Dorothea's letters—which were interesting and frequent; generally, though common property, addressed to Mabel—who was the worse for that?

Dorothea was prospering, by her own accounts. She sent some very good flower pieces, and little bits of landscape, in time for the spring exhibitions, and Frank obtained places for several of them in the Academy and Dudley. On her return home she was to become a member of one of the water-colour societies.

Augusta's health improved, though she

was very delicate. They were in Rome for Easter, having travelled there by easy stages from Hyères, seeing much that was delightful by the way. Lady Courtney would not bring them back until the very end of April, meaning to cut the season's festivities very short on account of her daughter's unfitness for such things. They would be in time for a Drawing-Room early in May, show themselves at a few of the best places, and then go down into Devonshire.

In this state of affairs the winter and early spring fled by; but, in the same period, a bomb-shell had fallen upon the peaceful prosperity of Tregarthen—a blow wholly unforseen, and against which no one could have been prepared.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BLOW FALLS UPON TREGARTHEN.

Sir Theophilus and Lady Sarah Grenfell did not return from the Continent until Charles came down from Oxford for the Christmas season; they reached home only just in time to receive him.

A host of guests arrived a day or two afterwards. Tom Courtney—returned from his long cruise round the world, in decidedly better health; some of Lady Sarah's own family; hunting men, with their wives and daughters; county neighbours. Tregarthen was full.

'Let us make the house gay and pleas-

ant to Charlie,' said her ladyship to Sir Theophilus. 'We made a mistake, in the summer, by allowing him to be so much alone here; we will not do so again. As we had no shooting-parties in the autumn, we owe something to our friends, and will make it up to them now that the hunting is good. Let us give the boy no time for fancying himself in love.'

So all was festivity, hurry, bustle at the Park; a completely different order of things from the stately, decorous quiet which reigned there in the summer. A ball was to be given; a dance for the servants on Christmas Eve; and several large dinner-parties.

Being the only young member of the household, Charles had his hands full with his duties as host, and no one could find fault with the manner in which he discharged them; but he looked fagged very often.

'I tell you what it is, my boy,' said his cousin Tom, 'you have been grinding too hard at that blessed college of yours. Why on earth should you do so? I would cut the whole concern if I were you, and enjoy life.'

'I certainly don't enjoy this sort of thing,' said Charles, wearily. 'I shall be glad to get back to Oxford, there is some peace there.'

'Have a yacht,' proposed Tom. 'There is nothing like a nice little tight-fitting yacht for comfort. Not one of your big gay affairs where you are expected to entertain women, and carry London about the world with you; but a decent comfortable little tub, just enough for yourself and one man else, or perhaps two. Cruise about in a thing of that sort, lie on your back and smoke, and trouble yourself with nothing. That is the life for you. Peace! There is no peace anywhere like the

peace one gets at sea, where no one but a ghost or a stray mermaid can drop down on you, expecting you to do the civil whether you are in the mind for it or not.'

'I'll think about it,' laughed Charles. 'But as to cutting Oxford, I'll not do that. I've promised to do my best, and mean to keep my word. Oxford is well enough too. I'm happy enough there, Tom. That is, as happy as they make fellows in this world of ours.'

'Well!' yawned Tom, 'I'm glad I'm not clever. I never yearn for lectures and things.'

Rose Selby did not make one of the party at Tregarthen; she had not been invited, and was both perplexed and not a little hurt by the change which she perceived in her old friend. It seemed to her so very causeless. A formal invitation to the ball, for her sisters as well as herself, was the only hint that Lady Sarah

wished to see her during a whole fortnight.

Charles called at the cottage the day after his arrival at home, and sat with them for some time, talking over Withiel matters—Horace Selby's change of plans, Steenie's health, and other topics—in the most friendly manner. He looked in frequently afterwards; leaving game on his way home from shooting, and bringiug flowers and fruit for Miss Letitia, but seemed always busy and hurried after the first.

'We have such a tribe up at the house,' said he in apology, once or twice, but never a hint that his mother wished to see them.

Christmas Day approached, and the usual invitation for dinner at the Hall upon that festive occasion was not forthcoming.

'I do not understand what is amiss with her ladyship,' remarked Miss Selby, for the

third or fourth time. 'You have not done or said anything to vex her, Rose, have you?'

'Not that I know of,' said Miss Rose. 'I have ransacked my mind for days, and cannot make out what she can be affronted by.'

'It is not Charles, nor is it his father, who is offended. Sir Theophilus has just sent us a remarkably fine turkey, with his kind compliments. I hardly like accepting it, it is such a plain intimation that we are not to go up there to dine as usual.'

'Do not let anything which we do widen the breach,' said Miss Letitia. 'Some explanation will doubtless offer itself soon.'

'That turkey will stick in my throat, though,' said Miss Jane.

'You need not eat it, then,' rebuked her eldest sister. 'You can dine off the pudding.'

'I do not like to have the air of waiting for an invitation, and being disappointed,' said Miss Rose. 'Suppose we ask somebody to spend the day with us this year?'

'That would be a good plan; but who could come? Everybody has home engagements at Christmas time,' said Miss Selby.

'Mr. Grant?' suggested Miss Rose. 'He would be glad to avoid his lonely table on that day, I daresay, and we might have dear little Beatrice, too.'

'Yes,' replied Miss Selby, considering the suggestion. 'If he could leave his parish on that day. We could dine at two, which would give him time to drive over after morning service.'

Mr. Grant accepted the invitation; and the ladies made little Beatrice particularly happy on the occasion. Miss Rose brought out old toys, laid by ever since the days of their own youth, wherewith to amuse

her. She played at games with her, told her stories, and prepared a bran-pie, which appeared after dinner, to the child's immense delight.

She was allowed to disembowel it, and distribute all the little parcels contained therein :—little presents given by the Miss Selbys to each other, and to the servants; gifts sent down from London from all the family there to the aunts who had been so helpful to them in the summer; a beautiful picture-book for Beatrice herself, bonbons and crackers. Mr. Grant could not be left out. Beatrice exclaimed with joy,

'Here is something for you, too, papa! The Reverend Lionel Grant! That is you. Here, take it! What is it, papa? Let me see!'

It was a neat black velvet sermon-case, home made, but pretty and serviceable.

'It is beautifully sewn,' said he, gratefully. 'I shall value it much.'

The sewing had been done by Miss Letitia, but he looked at Miss Rose as he offered his thanks for it.

All this was very well, but no invitation for New Year's Day came, any more than for Christmas. The Miss Selbys could not understand it.

Charles brought his father with him to call the day before. Both gentlemen were perfectly cordial; but Lady Sarah made no sign.

Miss Rose was greatly hurt. She had never attributed caprice to her friend before, but saw nothing else to account for this extraordinary state of things now. She knew nothing of the real reason. That Charles had proposed to Mabel; that his mother wished no connection with them to keep up his fancy for her; that she supposed Miss Rose capable of nursing up her son's rebellion in secret, never occurred to the poor lady, who shed tears

in private more than once, to think of this unexplained coolness in the once cherished friendship.

Under these vague feelings of discomfort and annoyance, it was with considerable surprise that Miss Rose, a day or two after the New Year had commenced, received an agitated summons from Lady Sarah.

'Come to me, dear Rose, I am dreadfully upset. Come at once, I implore you.'

'What do you make of that?' said she, handing the note to her sisters.

'I really cannot tell what to think,' said Miss Selby.

'But you should go at once,' said Miss Letitia. 'There is trouble of some sort there. Perhaps something has been brewing all this time, which has now come to a climax.'

Miss Rose hurried on her bonnet, and went over to the Hall.

Lady Sarah was in her own sitting-room, and received her with effusion.

'Oh! my dear Rose, it is so good of you to come to me! I have no one else to whom I can turn for comfort, and I am in such a state. I feel as if the world were coming to an end.' The poor lady covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears. Miss Rose was much frightened.

'Dear Lady Sarah!' cried she, 'what has happened? Sir Theophilus—Charles—are they well?'

'Oh! don't name them, don't name them! Oh, my poor boy, my poor, poor boy!'

Miss Rose thought that some dreadful accident must have deprived one or both of life, and felt perfectly horror-stricken; but, at that very moment, a firm step came along the corridor, and Charles himself entered the room.

'Oh, Miss Rose! That is right, I am so glad that my mother has her good old friend with her. Mother dear, don't take it so much to heart, my father is in such a way, he will want all the support you can give him. Don't cry like that, mother dear, don't now, we must be brave and look matters in the face, grasp our nettle, you know—that's the way, is it not, Miss Rose?'

'What *is* wrong, Mr. Charles?' asked Miss Rose, relieved of her first fear.

'Why, the most extraordinary affair,' replied he. 'Mr. Barlow, our solicitor, came down from town to-day to say that he has been communicated with by some other lawyer, to the effect that my father's eldest brother did not die at the time which was supposed. On the contrary, that he lived, married, and left a son behind him. If this is the case, that man, or that man's son, is the heir to Tregar-

then; heir to all which my father and I have been accustomed to suppose ours.'

Lady Sarah's hysterical weeping broke out afresh, and both Charles and Miss Rose had to apply themselves to soothe her by every means in their power.

'It cannot be,' gasped Miss Rose, when her ladyship had sobbed herself into exhaustion. 'It cannot be. Why, dear Lady Sarah, there is the monument to his memory in the church, he was buried there. Rosewarne brought him home from Italy to be buried, don't you remember?'

'Oh, Rose, the blow comes from that man Rosewarne. He has always owed poor, dear Sir Theophilus a grudge, and has taken this dreadful way to avenge it. It seems that Mr. Grenfell wanted to marry his sister, and, when the late Sir Charles would not permit it, they made up a plot together that he should pretend

to be dead, and live abroad, married, in secret.'

'My dear Lady Sarah! such a thing must have been found out,' said Miss Rose. 'It could not have been.'

'I agree with you, Miss Rose,' said Charles. 'There is something too improbable about the whole story; and there is no explanation offered to account for the secrecy which has been maintained all these years. My uncle has been supposed to be dead this forty years and more. Were he living, he would be near seventy years old. I do not see, either, why the concealment has lasted so long, or why it has come out now. It looks suspiciously like a trumped-up tale to me.'

'And Rosewarne, Sam Rosewarne, says it is so himself? Is he in his right mind?'

'Apparently so. He says that my late

Uncle Charles married his sister in London, secretly; took her to Italy with him; —he was in weakly health, but improved there;—sent him home with a false story of his own death, and lived to have a child. Then, after all, he died. Rosewarne, who was in England at the time of his death, hurried back to Italy to see his widowed sister, and found that she had married again before he reached her, and fled from his sight in fear of his displeasure, taking the child,—a son,—with her. His ignorance of the language and country enabled her to elude his pursuit, and he lost sight of her; but, lately, he has discovered that her son grew up and married. Both the sister and her son are dead, but the son left children who can now be produced. It is a consecutive story, but must of course be proved. Rosewarne professes to be quite prepared for the closest investigation; but there are weak points in

his tale which, at present, need close examination.'

'I do not believe it,' said Miss Rose. 'It would have come out before. Some part of it would, at any rate. The thing is impossible.'

'Oh, dear Rose, bless you for saying so,' cried Lady Sarah. 'I felt sure that you would bring me comfort.'

Charles did not see the comfort in irrational disbelief, without grounds, but would not disturb any satisfaction which his mother might be able to take in it.

'Well, mother, you will cheer up, won't you, and pull yourself together. My father wants all the help we can give him to bear it, it is terrible for him. And there are all those people downstairs. What in the world are we to do with them if you break down?'

'Leave her to me for a while, Mr. Charles,' said Miss Rose. 'Let her have

her cry out, and talk it over with me. She will calm down best in that way. Tell your friends that she is not very well. This thing cannot be kept a secret long. You say that Mr. Barlow is here?'

'Yes, with my father in his room. My father has been very faint, but Jenkins is at hand. He and Purvis have been very attentive.

Poor Sir Theophilus! Had Frank Selby received a crushing blow, would *he* have been left to the ministrations of his valet and butler? Would his 'wifie' have wept apart in her own room, nor helped him to bear it by her sweet presence? There are compensations in the poverty which draws family life into such close bonds, after all.

Something of this sort crossed Charles Grenfell's thoughts as he went back to his father, and left his mother to her chosen confidante. He wondered at her for calling

in help for herself from outside, but he was glad that it was Rose Selby whom she sought. He was also saddened to perceive that the difference to him, personally, had not yet, to all appearance, troubled either parent. Neither of them had made the smallest exertion to control their grief for the sake of consoling him. It was the inheritance, not the heir, which was the first thought with each, and he was feeling very desolate. The shock of perceiving this, hurt him more than the blow which caused it. He thought of the way in which Mr. Selby had come at once to his daughter when in trouble and perplexity;—of how she had taken refuge in his arms as in an accustomed harbour of safety; of Mrs. Selby drawing her husband's head to her bosom when the children were lost; and he choked down an indefinite something which rose in his throat as he returned to his father's room.

'How does your mother take it?' asked Sir Theophilus.

'She is a good deal upset, sir, and very hysterical. Miss Rose Selby is with her.'

'I'm glad of it. I will go to see her presently, but I feel very shaky yet. Give me a little more of that wine, Charlie.'

Charles filled his father's glass, and pushed the decanter over towards the lawyer. He took none himself, but the omission did not attract any notice. Sir Theophilus sighed as he swallowed the old port which he loved; he lay back in his arm-chair, and turned again to the lawyer.

'Well, Barlow,' said he. 'You were saying——'

'Just so, Sir Theophilus. The marriage took place in the church of St. Clement Danes. I have a copy of the register here, all correct. That, at any rate, is a fact, and bears out Rosewarne's story. The man then accompanied your brother

and his wife to Rome, where they meant to remain until matters blew over, or until her parents had made a new home in Sydney, whither they went to avoid your father's displeasure. Your brother was in no state of health to endure hardship or roughing it in a new colony, but hoped that he might grow stronger by a year's residence in Italy; and that, then, the long sea-voyage might complete his cure. Rosewarne remained with them, in attendance upon his young master, for a few months, hoping to wean him from his determination to pretend death. His belief was that Sir Charles would forgive the marriage when resistance was futile, and that the birth of an heir would reconcile him to the inevitable. But your brother was firm. He said that the estate was a fetish, and ate out all natural affections. He would throw it all up at once and for ever. Mr. James would make a very

much better heir than he; and there were two more to follow, besides yourself, then very young. He would listen to no reason, despatched him with an empty coffin for the family vault, and hoped that your father would renew the lease of Trecotherick in Sam's behalf. The man would then have been able to keep an eye upon events, and to have reported them from time to time.

'Trecotherick, having been in the hands of the Rosewarnes for generations, was loved by them as their own. It was regarded by them almost as their own estate, and it was a tremendous blow to Sam when the lease was refused to him. Your father, Sir Theophilus, could not bear the sight of the man; who was very sore as to the refusal, and became insolent—egged on, it is to be supposed, by the knowledge of the trump card which he held in his hand. What knowledge old

Mrs. Rosewarne possessed of all this it is impossible to say. Her husband died, and Sam went to Australia, and brought her home again to Withiel. Sir Charles gave the old woman a cottage on the estate, but remained rigid as to Trecotherick.

'Meantime, your brother's child was born. The marriage does not appear to have been a very happy one. Marriages, contracted as that one had been, seldom are. The girl was not a good one. She had always been vain and flighty; she was now disappointed from being defrauded—as she considered it—of the chance of becoming Lady Grenfell. They were poor, too, and your brother's temper, always a difficult one, became chafed and tried by his wife's extravagance, and the need for economy to which he was so new. She was querulous, he domineering; she wearied of him, and sought other consolations. Frequent quarrels took place be-

tween them; and I should think that Mr. Grenfell was well punished for his wilfulness and deceit.

'The climax came at last. Shortly after the child's birth, your brother had occasion to make a journey which occupied a few days. He went alone, for his wife was still in delicate health, hardly recovered, and the infant would have been an encumbrance. High words had passed between them before Mr. Grenfell went, and he left her in temper; but, as far as is known, with no idea but of returning at the end of the week. During his absence, however, an Italian nobleman, who had become extremely intimate with Mr. Grenfell, and still more so with Mrs. Grenfell, though without her husband's knowledge, came to their house, listened to the lady's grievances, consoled her; and, when Mr. Grenfell returned to his home on the day which he had named, he found that his

wife had fled in the interim, with the man whom he considered his friend. He followed them, fought the Italian, and was shot through the heart.

'Rosewarne hastened to Italy to bring his sister away, and save her from the consequences of her sin; but she eluded him, disappeared with her betrayer, and he was never able to learn their whereabouts. Fearful of consequences, he thought it best to allow the whole matter to stand as it did; but his conscience had always been uneasy, and of late, having discovered by accident that his sister's child by Mr. Grenfell had grown up and died, leaving a son and daughter, now in London, he has determined to speak out, lest, as he puts it, further injustice be done to the true heir. In my heart, however, I believe that the man is thoroughly enjoying his revenge upon the family for fancied affronts.'

'Have you seen the man whom Rosewarne puts forth as the true heir?' asked Charles.

'No; Rosewarne is very close about how he met with him, or who he is. I suspect that the young fellow requires to be coached in his part before he can be presented. Rosewarne says he will appear when he is wanted, and he supposes that you will fight the matter.'

'Fight! To the last gasp,' said Sir Theophilus. 'Have I spent my life in improving and enlarging the estate which has been in the family for six hundred years?—have I put almost every shilling I possess into the land, considering it as entailed upon my own son?—shall I see that son a beggar—all for the sake of the low descendant of an abandoned woman—a relation of my brother's valet? Fight! yes, I should think so.'

'Yes, yes,' said Mr. Barlow. 'You are

right, Sir Theophilus; but it is fair to warn you that this Rosewarne has a strong case on the face of it.'

'But my father has possession,' said Charles, 'and command of the sinews of war. Was my uncle of age when he is represented as having married?'

'When he *did* marry, my dear sir. The register proves marriage. Yes, he was of age.'

There was a dead silence for some time, then they began again to recapitulate the whole story, bit by bit.

Sir Theophilus tried to recall what he had ever heard about his brother, but could not remember much. Traditions and memories of the dead linger long in country places, but forty years is a lengthy period to recall, and very few persons who had ever known Mr. Grenfell were now living. A few old villagers still existed who must remember him; the elder Misses

Selby might do so, but little could be hoped from such reminiscences. Every stone must be turned, however, and Mr. Barlow consented to remain at Tregarthen for a few days, to make inquiries in the neighbourhood, and collect such evidence as he might be able to discover.

Lady Sarah, the while, resuming her old habit of dependence upon Miss Rose for sympathy and counsel, had betrayed to her more than that lady had ever suspected.

'Oh! Rose, Rose,' her ladyship had said, 'when I took so to heart that unlucky boy's headstrong affair with your niece, how little did I think of the yet more cruel blow which Fate had in store for me!'

'What unlucky boy? What niece of mine?' cried Miss Rose, aghast.

'Did you not know?'

'I have not the faintest idea of what you are speaking.'

'Why, Charles. He wanted to engage himself to your eldest niece, the one who was here with the little invalid brother, and defied his father and me in the most headstrong manner when we refused our consent.'

'Mr. Grenfell! Wants to engage himself to Mabel! My brother's daughter! My dear Lady Sarah, you must be under some mistake!'

'I wish I were, Rose, but it is too true. And he won't give it up; and your brother wrote in really quite an insolent way to Sir Theophilus, and Charles told us, when he came down from Oxford, that he is to speak again when his college course is completed; and that, though Miss Selby refuses him, he has reason to believe that she really likes him, and he won't give her up. Oh, Rose! I am the most wretched mother on earth!'

Miss Rose quite forgot to condole with

the poor lady, so astounded was she at the revelation she had received. Was this the reason of the recent coolness? Over what a mine had they not been living! Who would have thought it?

It was not in the natural course of things that Miss Rose should regard the love affair quite with Lady Sarah's eyes. What a splendid thing for Mabel! Only think of having her there, mistress of that magnificent place! Could it ever come about? She longed to return at once to her sisters, and tell them of this wonderful event. The claim upon the inheritance occupied her mind little in contrast with the idea that their niece might have been the wife of Charles Grenfell! Might be so yet, for all that she knew. Mabel might have dropped a hint of what was proceeding; they would have been discretion itself, and ought to have been trusted.

Miss Rose, neglecting her part of com-

forter to her ladyship, made some hurried excuse to leave her; and, promising to return later in the day, posted back to the cottage with the wonderful news for her sisters. There was food for conversation among them through the rest of their lives.

CHAPTER VIII.

DETAILS.

It was a dreadful time for Charles. Everything seemed to fall upon him at once. He had to console his father, comfort his mother, consult with Mr. Barlow, control the servants.

He had to announce the blow which had fallen upon them to the gay friends with whom the house was filled. Many of these were relations, the facts could not be kept concealed from them; and their condolences were almost more trying to him than anything else.

Happily, most of them decided that they could do no good, and that it would be a relief to 'poor dear Lady Sarah,' if they moved on to houses more cheerful to themselves than Tregarthen would now be.

Lady Medlington, Tom Courtney's elder half-sister, was profuse in her expressions of sympathy, and voluble on the subject of Lady Sarah's wrongs.

'Save me from that woman's voice, dear Rose,' urged her ladyship. 'She drives me distracted.'

Tom, good-hearted but stupid, wanted to stay with his cousin; but Charles felt as if he needed quiet in which to face his new position, and think out his future. He frankly said so, and Tom was rather glad to be relieved.

'Come yachting with me, old fellow, as soon as you can. There is nothing like a cruise to put life into a man after a lot of worries and troubles. This will all come

straight again, I bet you what you like; and, when it does, you and I will tool off to the Mediterranean or somewhere, and be jolly together.'

He was the last to leave, but the next evening witnessed his departure; and Charles stood on the doorstep, and heaved a sigh of relief as he saw his dog-cart disappear down the avenue.

At last he had a little time to himself in which to realize what had happened, and what, in all probability, would happen in his near future. Clasping his hands behind him, he paced slowly along the terrace, gazing absently upon the fair scene before him, hitherto to be his own in the years to come; now, in all likelihood, to be nothing to him ever more.

It had been an open season so far, but frost seemed likely to set in with a new moon, which was now, for it was early evening, already gleaming—a silver cres-

cent, attended by one bright star—from a sky whence the roseate hues of the sunset had scarcely faded.

Colour had not yet fled from the grass or clumps of evergreens near at hand; but night was falling quickly, and the bare branches of more distant trees and shrubs looked like delicate black lacework against the soft grey haze.

The scene, the hour, were inexpressibly soothing to Charles. He descended the terrace steps, and strolled slowly along winding paths, through the American gardens, to the stream which brawled merrily among its stones at the bottom of the glen.

He could hardly be said to be thinking; his mind was too much wearied from the shock, and his subsequent exertions, to be capable of earnest thought; but a series of impressions were conveyed to him without conscious effort on his part.

The repayment of back rents, the expenses of a legal contest, the total loss of all the land in which Sir Theophilus had invested so largely, would leave his father a beggar—a literal beggar. Even the family plate, his mother's heirloom jewels, were in the entail. Lady Sarah had a handsome dowry settled upon her; but that would also go, for his father, should this story be true, had possessed nothing to settle at the time of his marriage. His mother brought little or no fortune with her. Sir Theophilus, of course, had a younger brother's portion, but little of that would remain if law expenses proved to be heavy—none if indemnification were insisted upon. He would be a bankrupt.

And himself! Struck down, by one fell blow, from the position of a young prince to the condition of a penniless beggar, with a father and mother to support. He could never hope to marry; he had not

even a profession in his hands. Some among his friends would doubtless help to complete his education, or find him some kind of employment; but no employment was remunerative at first.

Mabel must be released at once. Released? He did not possess any hold upon her to be released. He was destitute even there. He had no hope of any bright future for which to work; nothing to lure him on over the drudgery of earning his bread, could he do that.

He could not emigrate, and put out his strong young arms to labour. No, his parents must not be abandoned; their position must be softened to them as much as in him lay. How would his mother's rather querulous temper bear such reverses? If Tregarthen had not contented her, how would she ever bear what must lie before them now?

And his father! Charles saw no possi-

bility of any other life than one in London, or some other big city. How was he to earn a livelihood except in some such place, and his father disliked town life so exceedingly.

By degrees the poor young fellow's thoughts wandered from his parents and fixed themselves upon his love. He had walked here with Mabel more than once; she had liked this wild little glen, it had been here that he had met her, by accident, on the first early morning walk which she had taken.

He had come there to indulge in thought of her, for he loved this place, too. He was strolling idly along, dreaming of her, and, upon an abrupt turning in the path, saw her unexpectedly. She was watching a water-wagtail making absurd little short runs upon the stones in the stream, and her back was turned to him.

There had been a storm of wind and

rain in the night, but the sun shone then, and cast quivering lights upon her through the trees, whose leaves were beginning to thin. Such as still presented full foliage had taken autumn tints, and a rich mass of orange and brown just beyond her threw up her dark-robed figure into strong relief. She had taken off her hat, which hung upon her arm. She had plucked a rose as she came through the gardens, and fastened it close to her white throat, and a branch of mountain ash, broken off by the storm and heavy with scarlet berries, was held carelessly in her hand.

He had stood for a moment watching her so; then she had turned, seen him, and a rush of vivid colour had overspread her fair face, as the shy eyes beamed with a welcome, too.

'Oh, Mr. Grenfell!' she had cried, rushing into speech, in girlish fashion, to con-

ceal her little nervous surprise. 'Oh, Mr. Grenfell! what a lovely place, and what a lovely morning. I feel inclined, like Sir Lancelot, to sing "Tirra lirra, by the river."'

He could see her in his mind's eye now, blushing, smiling, lovely. All the sunshiny day was then before him; now the glen was rapidly darkening, the trees were bare, the shadows dense, cold, and the blackbird, which then was whistling his mellow matins upon an autumn spray, was silent and fled. Fled with all his own hope of love and joy, peace and happiness. He was alone, and must ever be alone.

Charles groaned, turned quickly upon his heel, and returned to the house. There, a change came over his depression. He was relieved from its weight as if by a magic touch, and resolution came to his aid. He lifted his head, proudly.

'I *will* not give up the *hope* of winning her; at any rate, I won't give up till I have battled for it, inch by inch. Pluck will carry a man through oceans of trouble, and now is the time for pluck, Charles Grenfell. There is no need for you to throw up the sponge at the first knock down. I will have that girl yet. I am convinced that something is wrong about this story. There is a screw loose somewhere. I will turn every stone, but I will find out where, sooner or later.'

Next morning he set himself to write down a clear, concise statement of the whole matter as it came out, leaving blank pages for annotations facing each sheet of manuscript, and entering queries at each point which seemed to him to need particularly close investigation.

His uncle had married, certainly. There was no query there. He had gone to Rome, it was said. Did he go to Rome,

or where? Had he really been killed in that duel? What doctor attended him? What ship brought home that coffin? When did he really die? Might he not really have been brought home, as was supposed? Might not the first proof of Rosewarne's falsehood lie there? A lie proved anywhere in his story would be to shake the whole foundation of it. But how to know whether, if a body did lie in that coffin, it were that of his uncle or not? The first thing for him to do would be to question the old villagers about his uncle. No good would accrue to him from secrecy. The more the whole country-side talked, the better for him. That very morning he would begin his crusade, and pursue it vigorously.

Mr. Barlow had no doubt of the marriage; he had verified that. Little doubt existed of the fact that his uncle had gone to Rome, and expected to have a child.

A letter from him to the lawyer had been found, dated from Rome, announcing the approaching event, and asking whether, in case of the child being an heir, his parents would forgive him for his marriage, and receive his wife.

The head of the lawyer's firm at that time was the present Mr. Barlow's father. He had approached the baronet, and written in reply, stating that, if Mr. Grenfell chose to send the infant to Tregarthen, and sign papers relinquishing all claim upon it at that or any future time, it should be received and brought up as his son, but that the plainest and strongest proofs must be given that the child was really the heir, born at a reasonable time after the marriage. No child of alleged premature birth would be accepted, nor should either Mr. Grenfell or his wife ever enter his father's doors again during his life. The letter was brutal in its

coldness, precision, and implacability. A copy of it was preserved with Mr. Grenfell's own application. The reason for the determination was not hard to discover. Thomasine Rosewarne's character was not above reproach.

This was the part of the story which first impressed itself upon Charles. Was it possible that any former marriage had been suspected on Thomasine's part? His uncle was unlikely to have risked so much for love of a girl of notoriously light character. He would hardly have made that appeal to his father had he not believed the child to be his. But then, why was it never sent? Why, when left a widow, had Thomasine fled from her brother's search, and burdened herself by the maintenance of an infant of which the family were willing to relieve her?

Mr. Barlow admitted that this was a decidedly weak point.

'Rosewarne says that he has the certificates of birth and baptism to produce,' said he. 'He has made a preposterous demand of a price for them. He offers to give them up, and to proceed no further, if Sir Theophilus consents to buy these papers from him; but, of course, we will do no such thing. The man is a fool to ask it.'

'You will send to search registers, and make inquiries on our part in Rome at once?' said Charles.

'Yes, a most trustworthy messenger is prepared to start immediately; but inquiries among old villagers in these parts may bring something to light first, and render it unnecessary to send.'

The closest investigations in the neighbourhood were set on foot, but their result was to strengthen rather than to weaken Rosewarne's story. Thomasine had jilted her former lover ruthlessly, when Mr.

Grenfell began to raise her hopes. Her name had been connected with that of no one else from that time forward. Her brother had always been a watchful guardian over her, and had taken care not to allow her to imperil her chance of marrying his young master by any folly on her part. He alone held the clue which could unravel the whole coil, and this he would only consent to furnish upon receipt of hush-money that no honourable gentleman would be likely to pay. Certainly not Sir Theophilus. Fact and falsehood were, in truth, so ingeniously interwoven that it was difficult for any straightforward mind to attempt to unravel them.

Rosewarne's story of his young master's secret marriage, supposed death, and real death, were all perfectly correct; but why had Mr. Grenfell pretended to be dead, and attempted to obliterate all traces of his existence, when his father had cer-

tainly consented to meet his demands part way? The coffin said to contain his body had been sent off soon after receipt of his father's letter. Did he think to make better terms by delay? Did he object to give up his child? Had he any doubt as to the child's paternity,—doubts which he dared not face? Here all was silence.

Rosewarne had never perfectly lost sight of his sister. She had sunk from bad to worse, and been, not only a great disgrace to him, but a heavy charge, before death released him from it.

Did he fear investigation with the details of her life; and consider it wise to let the oblivion of time shroud some part of them before opening her case?

Her son had equalled her in vice. He had died during the past year; and sent his two children to their great-uncle to be provided for by his charity.

Had this been the acting cause of the

claim upon the estate being made at last? Had their father's life made such a course wholly impracticable before? Was a claim made for a young boy more likely to be entertained than one for an irreclaimable man?

The children arrived in England in rags and dirt; the man who brought them over had sold them—he called it apprenticeship, but it was, in fact, nothing better than slavery—to a fellow who made a business of hiring children out to play hurdy-gurdys and show white mice, etc., on the London streets. The boy, however, possessed his uncle's address, and managed to appeal to him for protection. Both children were so handsome as to attract attention in the streets, and were a source of considerable revenue to their master, who hotly resisted their removal from his employment.

He fixed their ransom at a price which

Rosewarne neither could nor would pay. He offered to recoup him at a very much lower rate of payment, though one which he believed to be what the man was likely to have really put out of his pocket; but this was scorned. It might be what he had literally expended, but was not a tithe of what he expected them to bring him in; and he tried to get more by bluster. Rosewarne threatened him with the police, and refused to pay him anything at all.

The quarrel ran very high, but Rosewarne possessed himself of the children at last. He had already been drained very dry of money through his generosity to his sister's family, and now looked forward with some dismay to the necessity of educating these young people, who would be unable to earn respectable livings themselves for several years. He would not risk the future comfort of his own invalid daughter for their sake; and was in

sufficient difficulty to know what to do for them when Mr. Selby's application to him for models occurred. It was opportune, as helping him for a while, and giving him time to think what he must do in the future.

The result of his deliberations was to place the case in the hands of a speculative and unscrupulous, though clever rascal of a solicitor, in the hope that the Grenfells would buy off their claim, compromise it, provide for the young ones in some way, so as to hush the whole scandal up. This man was to be paid out of the same source; he undertook the risk of that; it was to be Grenfell money or none.

Rosewarne thus trusted to relieve himself of a burden, to provide for the orphans, and, at the same time, to wreak his spite upon the family to whose pride he attributed his sister's ruin and his own expulsion from the beloved home of his forefathers.

His attachment to Mr. and Mrs. Selby, and the indignation which he and his felt for their daughter's treatment at the hands of his own enemies, fed the rancour which he felt towards them, and, by a curious twist in his conscience, helped to justify his conduct to himself.

What he was not prepared for was the attitude taken by two such honourable men as Sir Theophilus and his son.

These gentlemen felt no doubt whatever as to what they must do. The idea of compromise never occurred to them. The story was either true or false; if true, they would abide by it. Rosewarne must prove its truth. It became a very much larger issue than he was prepared for, but he was now forced to abide by his own action, as the Grenfells scorned all secrecy, all accommodation of the matter.

The investigations made by Mr. Barlow and Charles among the aged villagers did

not result in much that was desirable, as has been said. Mr. Charles Grenfell was well remembered as a 'handsome gentleman,' 'one who stood up straight, and spoke out, as if he were lord of all the land.' He was 'always about with that there Rosewarne.' 'He was a bit wild, like many another gentleman, but had no harm in him; a kind, free-spoken gentleman, liberal to all.'

His admiration for pretty Tamson Rosewarne was well known. She was not a very good girl, but no certain scandal was known of her, nor were the ins and outs of either that affair, or of why Sam Rosewarne did not succeed in regaining the lease of Trecotherick, understood.

There was little help to be found there.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MISS SELBYS' REMINISCENCES.

The excitement of the Miss Selbys upon hearing the news which their sister brought back with her was intense. They did not know how to take it all in.

That their own niece should have been so distinguished by the heir of Tregarthen as to have actually received an offer of marriage from him, and that she dared to refuse him, was the chief amazement to them.

The other matter was secondary to them. They did not believe in it; the

heavens *might* fall, but the Tregarthen family *could* not do so.

But Mabel!

'Dear child!' murmured Miss Letitia. 'She is really very pretty!'

'I am glad we thought of giving her those ornaments,' said Miss Selby, with a modest pride in the belief that they had shared in contributing to this honour of the family.

'There is a great deal in all those children,' said Miss Jane. 'Frank has done well with them upon the whole.'

'Yes! How clever dear Dorothea is!' said Miss Letitia, glancing up at the drawing of her favourite roses, which the girl had given to her.

'But how very close Mrs. Frank is!' cried Miss Selby. 'To think of all this going on beneath our very eyes, and she wrote to us last week, and never dropped a hint of it to us!'

'I rather wondered what brought Charles here so much of late,' said Miss Jane. 'I thought that her ladyship had got into one of her tantrums, and he was trying to make it up to us. But I bethink me now, that it was always "And when did you hear from your brother last?" "How are all your people in London?" and such things.'

'I wonder how it will all end?' said Miss Letitia. 'Sir Theophilus really seemed fond of dear May when she was there. He liked her singing to him. Suppose—suppose we ever did have her at Tregarthen!'

'No,' said Miss Selby, decidedly. 'That will never be. This is Charles's first fancy, but first fancies never come to pass. Frank and his wife have shown more sense in bringing up their children than I should have expected. How much of this is due to her, I do not know, but

the children are Selbys, and are turning out well. It is very much to Dorothea's credit that Miss Courtney should have taken such a fancy to her; and it is wonderful to think that dear May should be so very much liked, but *this* is quite preposterous.'

'They are all nice children,' said Miss Jane, 'I miss them cruelly, running after me everywhere. We are very dull without them.'

Mabel's affairs, touching these old ladies so closely, took the pre-eminent place in their minds. Their warmth of attachment to their brother and his family had been considerably heightened through the last few months of a connection so much closer than they had ever, previously, enjoyed.

They had seen how other people, whose opinion they valued, estimated them; the trouble which they shared over Steenie's illness had drawn them all much more

together; and the presence of the four young ones in their cottage had brightened their lives in a wonderful degree.

They certainly understood their sister-in-law better from a fuller acquaintance with her, though it was still their tendency to impute to her mismanagement all the faults which they either discerned or imagined in any of the tribe. Their virtues, talents, successes came to them as Selbys. Even their good looks were their birthright. The Selbys had always been a handsome family.

But, though this wonderful love affair damped the interest which they would otherwise have taken in the Tregarthen inheritance, it assumed a greater importance with them day by day, as the case opened out more and more.

Mr. Barlow's enquiries set them thinking over old times, as they had not done for a long while; and they recalled to each

other many stories of long ago, hitherto more than half forgotten.

These old-world tales were almost entirely the property of the two elder Miss Selbys, for there had been deaths among them as well as among the Grenfells, and they were much older than their sisters and Frank.

Their father had been rector of Withiel for very many years. He had come there as a young man, not long ordained. He had married there; they all had been born there, and passed there the whole of their lives.

Miss Selby and Miss Letitia had played, as children, with the elder brothers and sisters of Sir Theophilus; they had shared in their lessons, and grown up with them. They had mourned over the early death of their contemporaries, Henrietta and Louisa; and, among their treasures, they still cherished little keep-sakes from them:

locks of their hair, and mementoes of careless happy childhood. The same fever, which had been so fatal at Tregarthen, had created the gap in their own family also; and they had been dreadfully shocked by the terrible death of James.

Charles, the eldest of all, had been, in those old days, the big boy, too grand to play much with them. He had rather hectored his sisters, and teazed their playfellows, but they remembered him tolerably well, and now reminded each other of all manner of half-forgotten events.

Charles, calling upon them one day just about that time, listened with great interest to their reminiscences.

It was a dull wet evening. A short frost had given way to sleet and rain. He tramped in, depressed and weary, to find the sisters sitting round a cheerful fire in the gloaming, their hands occupied with knitting, or such work as needed little light.

The glow of the fire shone out, through the uncurtained windows, upon the wet muddy road, and tempted him in.

'Sit down, Mr. Charles,' said Miss Selby, with more kindliness than usual; the thought of Mabel at her heart. 'We are waiting for tea; it will soon be ready. Sit down, and stay for a cup with us.'

Charles did not require to be pressed. He sank down into the cosy depths of the chair turned round for him, and stretched his feet towards the blaze.

Miss Letitia handed a pretty *bonbonnière* to him.

'Are you too old to eat sweetmeats, Mr. Charles?' asked she. 'My nieces know that I am still fond of them, and sent me this for a Christmas present. Is there not a nice picture on the lid? That white horse stands out so well, does it not? I do so like a white horse.'

'Do you remember the white pony which Mr. Charles's uncle Charles used

to ride?' asked Miss Selby, as Charles helped himself to chocolate comfits.

'Yes, well. How beautiful I used to think it! He would give me a ride on it sometimes when he was very gracious to us. I believe that my liking for a white horse dates from that time. How many tricks he taught that pony to perform. The "Cavalier," he called it. A pretty creature! And do you remember his setter dog that worried poor Henrietta's pet cat, and how she cried for it?'

'Yes; he was so sorry, and played with us all the afternoon to make her forget it. He was very good-natured. He got up the great battle between Cavaliers and Roundheads that day; and, as we were all Royalists—we had been reading "Woodstock" together, and none of us would take Cromwell's side—he cut off all the lovely curls of that beautiful doll of Louisa's to make it into a Roundhead.'

'I remember. And we quarrelled with

him for spoiling the doll, and he said that girls were always making a fuss about nothing. He left us in a huff, and went out shooting with James. That was the day when he met with that unfortunate accident. How guilty we all felt about that. It seemed to us that it was, somehow, our faults for quarrelling with him. I remember it all as if it had occurred yesterday, and yet I was only ten years old!'

'What accident did he meet with?' asked Charles.

'The gun went off by chance. He was carrying it loaded, and the trigger caught in something as he was forcing his way through a hedge. The charge was lodged in his left arm, and there were great fears that he would have to lose it. Two of his fingers were so much shattered that they had to be amputated, but the arm was saved eventually.'

'Which of his fingers were amputated?'

'The third and fourth on the left hand. I recollect how they said it was well that he was not a girl, because, if so, he could never be married from want of the right finger to wear a wedding-ring. I believed this then; and really have often wondered what a woman would do under such circumstances.'

Charles was thoughtful, and soon took his leave.

Mr. Barlow and his father were sitting together on his return to the Hall. They were anxiously discussing the progress of the investigations, which were not great. The Oxford term would shortly re-commence, but the inquiries had not amounted to much.

Charles sat down, and began to re-arrange the logs on the hearth in an absent way, placing and re-placing them till the fidgetting annoyed Sir Theophilus.

'Do leave the fire alone, Charles,' said he, testily. 'What are you trying to do with it?'

Charles rose, walked to the window, looked out, with his hands in his pockets, then returned to the fire-place, and, leaning his back against the high mantel-shelf, looked down upon his father seated in his arm-chair, and the dapper little old-fashioned lawyer, with his gold-rimmed spectacles, at the table opposite, and spoke.

'I have heard something to-day that I believe may lead to a clue.'

'You have!' exclaimed his father. 'What can you have learnt?'

'Not much, but it has given me an idea. I have hesitated whether to tell you or not; at first I thought of just quietly finding out for myself; but, on second thoughts, I believe I shall want your leave to do so, father, and it would be wisest for Mr. Barlow to be with me also.'

'What do you mean, my boy?'

'Were you aware that, as a lad, your brother lost two fingers of his left hand, sir?' asked Charles.

'I never heard anything about it, but we might ask Honor Roscorla. She is very likely to remember the fact, if it is one. Where did you hear of it?'

'From Miss Selby, sir. The two eldest Miss Selbys knew him well, and seem to have recalled several things about him. Mr. Barlow might as well catechize them again, for more might come out of use. But this fact, this mutilation of the hand, would go far to prove that my uncle really does lie in the vault over yonder, if a skeleton, with such and such marks, is screwed down and soldered up there.'

'But, my dear young sir, I fear that it makes but little difference whether your uncle were buried here or in Rome. The marriage is a fact, and, if his wife had a

son, he would certainly inherit, in law.'

'But, if one part of Rosewarne's story is a fabrication, it throws discredit upon all. If he really did bring home his body, and it was buried in the church here, we have warrant for disbelieving the whole thing. We should have Master Rosewarne on the hip.'

Sir Theophilus looked at Mr. Barlow.

'What do you think about it, Barlow?' asked he.

'Why, I don't know, I can hardly say. The question takes me by surprise, quite by surprise. There is something in it, certainly.'

'How do you propose to find out?' said Sir Theophilus, turning to his son.

'Go and see, father.'

'Go! Go down into the family vault, and open a coffin which has lain there this forty years! I would not like to do so, Charles.'

'I expect that Rosewarne knows that you would not, sir, and trades upon that belief.'

'We might send the sexton to see,' said Sir Theophilus, doubtfully.

'That would be of but little service, sir. A jury would always feel that a man of that sort might be tampered with. If it be done at all, it should be done in the presence of proper witnesses who could attest to the circumstances.'

'Mr. Charles is right, sir, there,' said Mr. Barlow. 'We ought to have Mr. Raymond there, the clerk and sexton, yourself and Mr. Grenfell, and myself.'

'All those would be very well,' said Sir Theophilus, 'but I would not like the thing to be noised abroad, and to have all the whole village up in arms and gossiping about it being done.'

'It would create great scandal, I suppose,' said Mr. Barlow.

'We should have a perfect rabble about us; the story would fly all round the country side; and, if all were right,—indeed, whatever be the result, we should be ridiculed by everyone.'

'There is one way to get out of that, sir,' said Charles.

'How? What do you propose?'

'To go at night, and say nothing about it to anyone else.'

'Yes, yes,' said Mr. Barlow, slowly and thoughtfully.

'It would not be a very delightful or festive job,' said Charles; 'but, in my opinion, it ought to be done. It may help to shorten a long business, and save scandal eventually.'

'Let us consult Raymond,' said Sir Theophilus. 'Raymond is a shrewd man, and we cannot meddle with the chancel without his consent.'

This was a good suggestion, and Mr.

Raymond quite approved of the examination taking place. He, privately, feared that there was truth in the story, but was of opinion that, however hard upon the parents, the young man would be benefitted by the call upon his energies and endurance; would have his character improved by trouble, and turn out a finer fellow for the need of exerting himself.

It had hardly been the time yet for him to dwell upon this side of the matter, but he had been much with both Sir Theophilus and Lady Sarah since the blow had fallen upon them; he had prayed with and for them, and been not only a true and trusty friend, but a wise and Christian counsellor. He was much pleased with the way in which Charles had behaved through the whole time, and was watching the manner in which these untoward events were influencing and calling him out with deep interest.

CHAPTER X.

THE EMPTY COFFIN.

If recent events had brought Charles Grenfell into closer touch with his father than he had ever been hitherto, they had, in some measure, estranged him equally from Lady Sarah.

Both parents were perfectly agreed in forbidding his engagement with Mabel Selby; but Sir Theophilus instinctively betrayed a feeling for his son, through the whole business, which her ladyship never shared. Sir Theophilus sympathized with his son, honestly liked Mabel, would have

met with Charles's views had he thought it right to do so, and was sorry for the fancied necessity for disappointing him. He gave full appreciation to many advantages in the match, as cunningly laid before him by the young man; and Charles felt that he could have brought his father round with time.

Again, now, in this fearful blow. After the first, he took Charles into his confidence; showed that he recognized a common bond of anxiety; shared the trouble with him; sought his comradeship, and included him in every discussion.

His mother did none of this. She resented the idea of the artist's daughter succeeding to her place at Tregarthen; was supercilious in speaking of Mabel; would scarcely allow that she was pretty, and only grudgingly admitted that her voice was good.

'She might succeed as a concert-singer,'

had been one speech in her son's hearing, and one which he bitterly resented.

Mabel was, certainly, too shy to display the rich treasures of her mind and heart to the first comer. She needed congeniality before she talked easily of what interested her; but anyone might have loved her for her gentle manner, the sweetness of her smile, the simple readiness with which she met any small advances.

She had been in the house for weeks, and waited upon her hostess with every attention and care. Surely a woman, a mother, a lady should have learnt to appreciate her better in that time?

Lady Sarah's scorn and contempt only had the effect of estranging her son from her, and creating a warmer championship than ever in him for the girl he loved. Perhaps this feeling opened his eyes the more clearly to the hardness with which her ladyship took the present fearful

shock. It was not so much that he felt the lack of sympathy for himself, though he did miss that sadly, but it was that he saw so plainly the need in his father which she never attempted to supply.

It was evident to him, for the first time, that Sir Theophilus had never possessed a loving friend in his wife; he never attempted to go to her for comfort; it was plain that he had never done so at any time; he did not miss it, he did not expect it. Father and son were blessed with warmer blood in their veins, greater possibilities of affection in their natures; the trouble drew them into closer relation to each other, while Lady Sarah held proudly aloof.

Even Sir Theophilus seemed to need his son more than to feel with or for him; but it was something to be wanted, to be conscious that his father was learning to lean upon him, which was precious to poor

Charles in the sense of desolation which now lurked persistently in his heart.

Neither of them thought of telling Lady Sarah of the scheme for examining the family vault for confirmation of evidence as to the truth of Rosewarne's story. They went to her sitting-room for afternoon tea; Rose Selby was there, and poured it out. Sir Theophilus hoped that his wife's headache was better, Charles asked if she had driven out that day. The conversation was formal, polite, and cold. The gentlemen talked as if they were paying a morning call, and talk soon languished among them all.

'Well, my dear,' said Sir Theophilus, rising to leave the room, 'I am glad that Miss Selby is bearing you company this evening, for we are dining with Raymond.'

'With Mr. Raymond? Is not this rather short notice?' asked Lady Sarah.

'Yes, yes. It is not a party. We met

Raymond this morning about a little business, and he wants to talk it over quietly with Barlow; so invited us to take him as he was, and discuss it over a glass of wine.'

'Is it necessary for Charles to go as well as you?'

'Why, yes; I think Charlie had better go too. Yes, yes, certainly.'

'Well, Rose, you and I must make the best of our solitude, as all the gentlemen desert us. At what time will you require the carriage, Sir Theophilus?'

'We will not have it at all, I think. It is a fine bright evening, and we will walk across the park at our own time. I do not care to feel that horses are waiting indefinitely for me, and cannot exactly say when our business will be done. Do not wait up for us. I will say good-night, Miss Selby.'

It was a lovely night, though cold. The

moon rode high in the sky, clear, refulgent, and the stars were bright in the crisp, frosty air, as the three gentlemen walked over to the rectory. They glanced up involuntarily at the church tower as they emerged from the shrubberies through a gate upon the village road. It rose, square, grey, silent, above a belt of trees, dense masses of evergreens solidifying their shadows at their base.

The village road wound round the turn where the church stood, and stretched onwards towards gleaming lights from the cottages nearest at hand.

They did not pass the church, they came upon the road between it and the Miss Selbys' house. There a bright light shone out across the garden, as of a wood fire blazing on the parlour hearth; but, even as Charles observed its cheerfulness, some servant's hand drew obscurity across the window, and shut it out from his

gaze. It was like the extinction of a hope.

Charles shivered.

'Are you cold, Charlie?' asked his father.'

'A little, sir.'

'Well, we will be in Raymond's parlour in two minutes more.'

'Good-night, maister,' said the homely voice of a labourer, passing them on his own way home.

'Good-night, good-night, my man,' said Sir Theophilus.

Good-night! Yes, it was the same key. Good-night! Abandon hope!

Mr. Raymond met them at his door, hospitable, cheery, and kind. Dinner was announced almost immediately, and they went into a room which looked very cosy and comfortable after the rather dreary magnificence of Tregarthen dinners lately.

A neat, pleasant-faced young woman waited; the rector kept no indoors man.

Soup steamed on the table, wine was airing in the fender; all felt the comfort around them.

'I feel somewhat like a boy again, Mr. Raymond,' said Mr. Barlow, turning his chair a little round towards the fire, when dinner was over, and lifting his glass to the light. 'A boy, planning a stolen frolic.'

Was that dapper little white-headed man ever a boy? thought Charles. How many years ago that must have been!

Still, something of the same feeling ruled them all; and in the cheerful glow of that comfortable fire, rosy lamp-light on the table, a good dinner just eaten, claret of unexceptionable quality in their glasses, and the rector keeping up agreeable conversation, that sensation was predominant.

But, gradually, as the time for starting upon their expedition drew near, and the claret shrank down in the jug, so shrank

their exhilaration. Like Bob Acres' courage, it oozed out at their fingers' ends, but none would be the first to confess it.

Charles roused them after a time; he was more keen about the search than the older men. It had been his thought.

The clerk was in waiting in the kitchen, and the sexton lived close by. The gentlemen wrapped themselves up warmly, and set forth.

A short cut across the rectory lawn, where the hoar frost spread the grass with molten silver, led to a narrow path, very dark among laurels and holly; and at the end of which was a gate into the churchyard.

The church, like so many country churches in Cornwall, was a fine old building of grey stone—granite. It was large for its needs, and a fine shell, but had, doubtless, suffered during the Civil Wars, for there were only fragments here

and there of stained glass even in the east window; of carved wood there was little or none; nor did it contain any monuments of ancient time. A brazen sundial was let into the wall above the porch, and there was a mutilated stone cross in the churchyard. The tower leant out of the perpendicular almost as much as that at Bridgenorth, and contained a peal of bells which were sweet in tone, but minus one of the full number. They had been cast, so tradition said, at a place in the neighbourhood still known as Bells-i-cast, and contained a great deal of silver in the metal from which they were constructed; but no bells were made there now, and the sixth bell was wanting.

The place was rather neglected, but was picturesque,—all the more picturesque from that very reason. The ground of the churchyard had risen, and presented an irregular surface of ups and downs, diversi-

fied by granite or slate headstones, and wooden erections, half buried in rank grass. Great horse-chestnut trees overshadowed it on one side, and ivy mantled the church thickly, forming a home for many a bird and bat. Even now,—as the gentlemen waited in the porch for the clerk, who had gone round by the sexton's house to fetch him, and had forgotten to leave the keys with them,—even now, an owl, disturbed by their presence, rustled the leaves, and sailed out upon its soft wide-spread wings, hooting its displeasure in weird tones, which caused a shiver in its hearers.

But the two men approached with their implements, and the key turned in the massive old lock, which admitted them into the mysterious silence of the dimly-lit church.

'We ought to have brought lights,' said Charles.

'There are candles in the vestry,' said Mr. Raymond; and they all proceeded up the aisle to the vestry entrance.

Any familiar place or object under an unfamiliar aspect is very apt to arouse an uncanny sensation in an imaginative mind, and this was present to all the party now. Silence fell among them, as, hat in hand, they walked in single file over stones and brasses recording the burial-places of their neighbours of many generations, and among the old-fashioned empty pews ranged on either hand.

Mural tablets were let into the walls on every hand, chiefly in memory of former members of the Grenfell family. In their own great square pew, which filled up half of the north aisle, a full-sized white marble angel mourned, bending over the urn which surmounted the slab to the memory of the baronet's young sisters, who had died

within a week of each other; and the great black-edged escutcheon, which had been put up for his parents, hung there, its bloody hand prominent among the heraldic quarterings on the shield.

Clouds, floating athwart the moon, now caused shadows to fall thickly across the dimly lighted place, and now, passing away, allowed a flood of pale light to render all visible. It was easy to fancy lurking phantoms behind the pillars, outstretched arms, ghosts of those who had worshipped there so often in life, and who lay mouldering beneath their feet now in death. They could not talk upon irreverent subjects under the sense of awe which crept over them, neither could they discuss their errand, and silence was maintained, broken only occasionally by a necessary question and answer.

Candles there were in the vestry, but

not so many as Mr. Raymond had supposed. Sir Theophilus, Mr. Barlow, and himself each took one in their hands; the sexton stuck a piece of one in a lump of clay fastened to his hat; Charles and the clerk, wanting their hands free to assist in the work, went without, and they lighted the pieces left from the previous Sunday in the pulpit and reading-desk. The light thus gained was sufficient for their purpose, but, clustering all on one spot, left the rest of the building still dark.

The vault lay eastward beneath the space surrounded by the altar rails, and was closed by a huge flat stone in the aisle without. A brass plate let into this slab announced it to be the burial-place of Sir Richard Grenfell of Tregarthen. Anno Domine, 1474.

'Ah!' said Mr. Raymond, 'there has been many a member of your family laid here since that, Sir Theophilus.'

'I never thought to have to enter it in life,' said the baronet, who looked very white.

The men, with the aid of Charles, were prizing up the stone; it was weighty, and took all their strength.

'It be stuck, 'tis so many a day sin' it wer took up,' said the clerk.

'Iss fy, that it be,' said the sexton, 'nor I doan't care how long it be afore it be raised up, 'nother. 'Tis a gashly job at all times.'

The huge mass was slowly lifted, and turned up on end, displaying a flight of stone steps descending as it were into depths of Cimmerian darkness. The men rested for a moment after putting out their force to move it, and wiped their brows.

'The plaguey old thing went easier the last time it wor took up,' said the sexton. 'Twor for your honour's father. Madam wor laid here not so long afore; her broke

her heart, 'twas said, after so many of her childer died, and her just dwined away after Mr. Charles wor brought home. Ah! well-a-day, I can see her now as if her wor alive here. Her was a mighty fine lady, tall and strite, and wored big grey curls all above her forehead ranged round. Her had specs that hung round her neck by a ribbon, and her'd a way of lifting them up to her eyes to look at you, through and through, till a man felt all wambly like in his innards, more special if he knowed he'd been up to any little games as he wouldn't want to hear tell on. Her hand was as white as the snow, and her wored rings on it that shone forth with all colours like raindrops in the sun, and black mitts her wore too allers. Cri! I can see 'em now.'

'I mind her well,' continued the clerk, 'but her wor mightily broke down afore her comed here.'

'Ah! Her wor so. 'Twor a pity for all

them pretty young ladies and gentlemen too. A sad thing, that it wor.'

Charles noticed the hand in which his father held the candle shake, and saw his face looking very ashy and wan.

'Father,' said he, 'you had better not go down, it will be too much for you.'

'No, no, my boy,' said he. 'I will go through with it now I'm here. These fellows just happened to call up before my eyes my poor mother's look so forcibly. It is odd how I had nearly forgotten her, but that mention of her hand lifting her glasses to her face, and the diamonds flashing on it as she did so, brought her whole figure up before me so plainly. I could have fancied that I saw her coming up those steps, where, certainly, I never saw her in life.'

'You had better not go down there, sir,' said the young man.

'No, no, I won't give in now,' said Sir

Theophilus. 'The fancy has passed away.'

'Then we had better get it over,' said Charles. 'I will go first.'

Sir Theophilus shuddered as he saw his heir, his only child, his beloved son, descending into the tomb. He never knew that he was so imaginative in temperament, but the whole surroundings of the scene were impressive.

'Mr. Raymond had best come next,' called up the young fellow's cheery voice. 'It is as dark as a sack.'

'Let me, your honour,' said the sexton, and he descended first, then Mr. Raymond.

'Now, sir,' said the clerk to Mr. Barlow, who took his turn, and Sir Theophilus followed.

The place was only illuminated around the spot where they stood, even with all the lights they had brought, for it was

vast. The many coffins, ranged upon stone or slate shelves around it, had nearly all been covered with black velvet when laid there. This absorbed the light, and only the gleam of a few silver nails here and there reflected a chance ray.

'Ah! deary me!' said the sexton. 'Here they'm all lying! Thiccee one is your honour's father, and thiccee be your ma, a-lying by his side. They there twain be the two young gentlemen as died of the fever, and this little one be Master Marmaduke, all a-waiting for the last trump as a chield may say. Here be the young ladies, "lovely in life, and not divided in death',' I mind Sir Charles saying. My feyther was sexton then, it has always been in the family, and I wor but a chield learning the business. 'Twor the first time I wor ever here, but he would have me to help, for Sir Charles he would have the slab made double width so as they'd lie

together, sociable like. He comed down his own self to see it wor as he liked, and I mind him a-saying they very words, standing just as it might be Sir Theophilus hisself in that very place.'

The old man's cracked voice re-echoed strangely in the enclosed space, and Sir Theophilus moved hastily from the spot where he stood. His son stepped to him and took his arm in his.

'Let us get to work,' said he. 'We don't want to stay here longer than necessary. Trebilcock, which is my uncle's coffin that we want to see?'

'Thiccee old outlandish-looking thing,' said the man. 'They don't make things sensible fashion like us do to home in they there parts, it du seem.'

It required the united strength of all the party, except Sir Theophilus and his son, to draw the coffin out. The baronet stood aside, supported by Charles. The

coffin was very heavy; it was of lead, soldered carefully down, and covered with black velvet. It long resisted the efforts made to move it, and yielded at last with a sudden jerk, which brought it down with a crash, end foremost. The men, fearful of having the weight on their feet, started back; a waft of air, stirred by the sudden movement, caused the candle held by Sir Theophilus to flare and gutter, the hot wax fell on his fingers, and he dropped it from his hand in the moment of surprise. It was extinguished by its fall, and rolled out of sight. Sir Theophilus shuddered violently.

Charles took off his own overcoat, laid it on the step, and made his father seat himself thereon, standing beside him, with his strong young arm over his shoulder. The elder man put up his shaking hand and laid it in that of his son, who held it in his firm, warm clasp.

'It will soon be over now, pater,' said he.

It was a very strange scene. Mr. Barlow and Mr. Raymond had set their lights upon the ground on either hand behind the group around the coffin. The sexton still had his in front of the sou'-wester which he wore, like a miner does. His form, bowed and bent with labour and rheumatism, had a very grotesque appearance. He wore no coat, and had rolled up his shirt-sleeves to free his brawny arms. In strong contrast to him appeared the dapper London solicitor, and the clerical figure of Mr. Raymond, beside whom stood the burly village clerk. The lights upon the ground fell upwards on their backs, leaving their faces in deep gloom, and the candle end in the sexton's hat shifted its gleam in this direction and that with every movement.

The velvet was ripped off, the lead cut

through, and a shell of some foreign wood appeared. Upon it was a silver plate, shield-shaped, bearing the inscription,

CHARLES GRENFELL,
Obiit anno Domine, 1830.
Ætat 22.

'It wor weightier nor this when it comed home,' said the sexton, renewing his reminiscences. 'This wor all put up in an outside case of wood, so as it should not look like to a coffin at all. They foreign folks would not bear a coffin and a corpse home, say what Rosewarne would to 'un, so he put the trick on 'em, and made it up to look for all the world like a case of goods as he was conveying. I heerd him tell about it my own sen. They thought as how it would bring ill-luck on the ship to have a dead man aboard, and it was just as if they wor right, for such a voyage as it wor never was. The winds they raved and the waves they raged as if

they'd got Tregeagle hisself there, and the sailors they got some inkling of what he'd been up to, and they used to look at him, glowering as though they'd like to put their knives into 'un, and they'd say, gloomy-like, in their own lingo, "One might think as we'd got a corpse aboard after all," they'd say.'

'Do you think,' asked Mr. Barlow, 'that there will be much left to see after so long a lapse of time?'

'Ay, there will so, for I mind me as how Sam Rosewarne telled that they do sommut to their dead folks over yonder to keep 'em from rotting away. "Sommut with balm," said he; though how balm could keep 'em, I can't say.'

They were working at the nails in the lid of the inner coffin as they spoke, and now raised it up. Beneath, lay a linen cloth. Mr. Raymond lifted it reverently from the face end, and sprang back with a

cry of surprise. All bent over; Sir Theophilus rose, and, leaning on his son's arm, advanced to look in.

The coffin was filled with stones!

Sir Theophilus fainted away. They were prepared for the sight of what had been a man; they were prepared for emptiness; they were not prepared for this.

Mr. Barlow took up one stone and another with the points of his fingers, and dropped them again. There was nothing else there.

'Here!' cried Charles. 'Help me! My father has fainted; we must carry him out. We ought never to have brought him here.'

They gathered round, and bore the poor baronet up the steps into the church.

'We must get him back to the rectory as quickly as possible,' said Charles, 'and send over for the carriage.'

'There is the bier handy, sir,' said the

garrulous sexton. 'We could carry him home most as soon on that.'

Charles shuddered.

'No, none of that!' cried he, sternly. 'Fetch a long cushion from our pew, that will do. Now, Raymond, you and Barlow take him just beneath the knees,—there, that is it. No, Trebilcock, don't touch him; you go first with a light, and you, Cleave, too.'

Thus they got Sir Theophilus back to the rectory before he came to himself properly, laid him on the couch beside the fire, and gave him restoratives.

Mr. Raymond bustled about, and administered hot brandy and water to them all, and indeed they needed it. The clerk and sexton were sent into the kitchen for creature comforts, and word dispatched to the Hall for the carriage. No thought of secrecy occurred to them, and the story flew round the village next day.

Sir Theophilus was extremely unwell, and kept his bed for days afterwards. Charles waited on him tenderly, and broke the news to his mother, his own heart feeling like lead within him the while, for he now believed in Rosewarne's story, and saw himself penniless and disinherited of everything in life. He must free Mabel, he had nothing to offer her now.

'God help you, my dear boy,' Mr. Raymond had said, when he left him that night.

'I need to put my trust in Him, sir,' replied Charles.

'He will not fail you. Whom He loves He chastens. Remember that.'

'I will try to do so, sir.'

So they parted.

CHAPTER XI.

MABEL'S ANGRY PASSIONS RISE.

Sir Theophilus was very unwell next morning. He had taken a violent chill in the vault, which all subsequent precautions had failed to counteract. A bad, feverish cold set in, and complete collapse of strength and energy. The doctor looked grave. No remedies seemed to touch the disorder; his patient did not seem to wish for recovery. Nor did he.

Why the discovery that his brother's body did not lie in the family vault should appear to him as such a conclusive proof

that Rosewarne's story was true might not be quite clear to an outsider, but both Charles and his father accepted it in that light. With headlong passion, with the imprudence of youth and a hasty temper, the elder Charles certainly had married a girl of great beauty and low birth, a girl whose character was slight, a girl of no education or breeding or particular cleverness with which to hope to remedy these defects in time. She had been clever enough to persuade the young man to marry her, but probably was not clever enough to conceal her deficiencies even through the earliest days of the honeymoon.

In a foreign country, the language of which she could not speak at all, and her husband but imperfectly, they must have been thrown wholly upon each other for all companionship or society. Mr. Grenfell wearied of her immediately; perceived

that he could never produce her as Lady Grenfell with the slightest credit; felt ashamed of her; chafed beneath the bonds created by his own wilful act, and attempted to cut them by a bold stroke for once and for ever.

In the same spirit of impetuous folly which had created the difficulty, he attempted to solve it by a fresh act, no wiser than the first, and had not lived to justify or to rectify it.

What he might have done had he survived his father, and learnt sense through the paths of trouble, could now never be known. Nothing which he did could alter the entail, or affect the fact that his son must be the baronet after his own and his father's deaths.

As long as that father lived, Charles hardly wondered that the Rosewarnes kept their secret, afraid of the consequences to themselves. Had they announced the true

state of the case, the child would certainly have been removed from the custody of such a mother, and been properly brought up; but why they maintained the secret after its grandfather's death remained to be proved.

It seemed a matter of small importance to Charles. The fact existed. Such a child had been born in lawful wedlock, and its father's early death had left it entirely in the keeping of unscrupulous people. That boy, or that boy's lawful son, must be the true heir of Tregarthen. The details yet awaiting legal proof were immaterial. There was little doubt but what Rosewarne could elucidate them as decidedly as he had substantiated all these early particulars.

So, with a heavy heart, Charles attended to his father; and, crushed himself, fought the crushing blow so painfully felt by the old man.

By care and skill the chill was overcome, the fever reduced, but the overwhelming depression remained. Nothing roused the poor old gentleman. He lay in silence, watching his son's every movement with pathetic eyes, and heaving the deepest sighs.

Unable to remit his constant attentions, or to leave his father alone for more than a brief interval, that son chafed greatly from indecision as to what his own course must be towards Mabel.

Of course she must be released from her indefinite engagement. Sorrowfully did the young fellow acknowledge to himself that no other course was consistent with honour; but, oh! to see her once more; to bid her adieu himself; perhaps to be allowed one farewell embrace. Might such indulgence not be his? He must give her up for ever; but might he not do it with the eloquence of eye and lip

to aid him? Letters were so cold, so inadequate.

But all Withiel knew of the catastrophe. The Miss Selbys were certain to inform their relatives of so wondrous a story; Mabel would hear of it from others before he could tell her himself. What must he do?

Finally, he wrote to Mr. Selby, shortly, and without entering into particulars; merely saying that strange events had been happening among them which must materially alter his course in life. He would prefer to relate the whole story to his kind friend in a personal interview, but his father's illness prevented him from running up to town for the present, and he hoped that Mr. Selby would reserve all expression of opinions until they met.

But the Frank Selbys had heard nothing from Withiel. The Miss Selbys were not

good or frequent letter-writers; and much excited as they were by all the wonderful marvels occurring around them, they could not determine how much or how little to write about them.

Miss Rose, the best correspondent among them, was wholly taken up with Lady Sarah, and did not consider it proper to disseminate gossip from the house while she was a trusted inmate of it.

Her sisters hoped to hear from Frank or his wife, with some intimation of Mabel's situation to guide them, or some allusion to Rosewarne and that other story; but Frank was busy, too busy to write just then, and a short letter from Mrs. Selby alluded to nothing particular. She did not choose to write even to her sisters-in-law of her daughter's love affair, and of the other event she knew nothing. The scandal had, so far, been kept from the public papers.

But the same post which brought the letter from Charles to Mr. Selby, brought also one from Miss Selby, whose epistles were apt at times to require a commentary. This one was more incoherent than usual, in the good lady's excitement and doubt as to what she ought to mention.

She and her sisters, she wrote, had been greatly surprised by Lady Sarah's news, and dear Mabel need not have been so secret towards them. They had done their best to be kind and affectionate aunts; surely their discretion might have been trusted by their nearest and dearest, who ever loved perfect openness of disposition. They certainly had been extremely astonished, dear Mr. Charles, such a fine young man, so attentive, bringing them pheasants with his own hands, and never breathing a hint. But, after all, it was no great wonder. Dear Mabel, a perfect Selby, her dear mother would

not feel hurt by Miss Selby saying so; and how Sam Rosewarne could have behaved so passed belief. Miss Selby had never thought it of him, but there really was no knowing what people were in this world. They would not believe it, however, say what Sam would, and Rose was far too much occupied, with dear Lady Sarah so nervous, to write herself, so sent her love instead, particularly to Mabel. So ran Miss Selby's letter.

It arrived at its destination at breakfast time, and Frank tossed it over to his wife.

'What do you make of this?' asked he. 'Elizabeth seems to be crammed up with news like a full bottle with a small neck, and cannot get it out.'

Mrs. Selby glanced at Mabel as she read, and back into her husband's eyes.

'Show it to the Duchess, my dear,' said he. 'It seems to concern her.'

'Is there no letter for me?' asked Horace, 'that beggar Grenfell has owed me one for the last fortnight. Is there none from Dolly either?'

'Here is one from Mr. Grenfell for me,' replied Frank, opening it. He handed it also in silence across to his wife after reading it, and she passed it on to Mabel.

'There must be something strange occurring at Withiel,' said she, as Mabel read with heightened colour. 'I do not see what Rosewarne can have to do with it, he has not been there that I know of. Indeed, he has been here several times lately, since you have been painting those children, so he has certainly not been out of town.'

Mabel laid down the letters without remark, and crumbled her bread with downcast eyes.

'May I read those letters, father?' asked Horace.

'Certainly, certainly. Perhaps your wisdom may throw some light upon them. Now, young ones, hurry up with your breakfasts. It is time for you to be off to school.'

A clearance was soon made, and the elder young people with their father and mother discussed the two letters, but could make nothing out of them.

'Rosewarne will be here this morning,' said Mr. Selby. 'He is coming to see the picture, for I finished with his models yesterday. I am not quite pleased with those children for models, they have not the look of thorough Romans. I thought so from the first, and it comes out more on the canvas somehow. They are handsome young beggars though.'

'Their names are Italian,' said Mabel.

'What are their names?' asked her mother, who had seen but little of them.

'Verdi,' replied the Duchess. 'Tommaso and Carlotta Verdi.'

'In other words, Tom and Charlotte Green,' laughed Horace. 'Rosewarne has sold you, father, for a penny!'

Frank laughed.

'Well,' said he, 'sold or not, I must not lose the morning light as it is so good today. We don't get such a painting light every Monday morning in London. Come to the studio in about half-an-hour, Duchess, I have a few touches to put into you; the last time I had you the atmosphere was too dull for your complexion, and the carnations in your flesh-tints did not come out delicate enough.'

Mabel was sitting to her father when Rosewarne was shown in, but there was no one else there at the time.

Mr. Selby paid the man for the children's services, showed him the half completed picture, and asked him what the young

ones were to do now. Did Sam mean them to be models regularly? Should he recommend them as such to his artist friends?'

'Well, sir, no thank'ee. I suppose as how you've not heard who they are?'

'No more than you have told me. And, by-the-bye, what have you been doing to displease the good folks at Withiel? I have had some mysterious hints of which I can make neither head nor tail.'

'Why, sir, you must hear it soon any way. 'Tis a queer story.'

Rosewarne looked hard at Mr. Selby, and glanced uneasily at Mabel, with an uncertain shifty expression, doubtful as to how they would take what he had to say.

'Why, what do you mean?' asked Mr. Selby. 'What can those children have to do with Withiel?'

'A good deal, sir, in the time to come, though not much so far. Those young

uns are my sister Tamson's grandchildren.'

'Your sister's grandchildren! Did she marry an Italian, then?'

'No, sir, she was wed to an English gentleman, and had a son by him.'

Again that uneasy expression came over the man's face, and he looked once more at Miss Selby.

Mr. Selby felt that there was something peculiar about his manner, and laying down his brushes, rose and turned to give him his undivided attention.

'Whom did your sister marry then?' he asked.

Mabel started to her feet, faced upon him with a look like a startled fawn, but did not speak.

'Mr. Charles Grenfell, sir. Him as was Sir Theophilus's eldest brother.'

'What do you mean?' cried Frank. 'That man died unmarried!'

'No, he did not, sir. He was married

to my sister at St. Clement Danes' Church, afore he went abroad.'

Mr. Selby looked at him with a piercing glance.

'And why was this never spoken of before?'

'Well, sir, 'tis a long story. But I lost sight of Tamson and her boy for years, which was one reason; and Mr. Charles, he had sent me home with a lie in my mouth, and I didn't just know how to prove my words without I could lay my hand upon the rightful heir.'

'The rightful heir!' exclaimed Frank, the full meaning of the situation only now becoming plain before his eyes. 'The rightful heir to Tregarthen!'

'Yes, sir. Tommaso is the heir to Tregarthen, and will get his rights, I hope. He is really called Thomas Grenfell, but the Italian folks could never master his name properly, and it came to be Tommaso

Verdi for convenience. The girl is called Carlotta after her father, who was named Charles after his'n, but always got called Carlo over there. Tom was after his grandmother, my poor sister Thomasine.'

'I do not understand it,' said Frank. 'How came you to lose trace of your sister, and find her grandchildren?'

'Well, sir, 'tis a long story, and I mean to keep all that for the lawyers. But Tommaso is the heir. He will be Sir Thomas Grenfell of Tregarthen, and must be put into possession of his right.'

Mr. Selby was thunder-struck.

'I cannot believe it,' said he.

'More nor you saith the same, sir,' replied the man, with a look that would fain have been indifferent, but was really watchful. 'More nor you du say so, but they'm wrong.'

'Do you consider what trouble you are bringing upon the family, Rosewarne?'

'What is that to me, sir? My business is to think of my own. Did Sir Theophilus think of me when his trustees refused to let me have Trecotherick again? Did his father think of me when he turned us all out, just because the heir behaved honourable to a poor girl? Would anyone of them have cared if he had wronged her? Is not this man playing the same game with you and miss here, paying no heed even if she should break her heart, so as his fine young heir marries some one as rich and as proud as his own self? But I have got him, now. He shall know what it is to scorn and slight people as good as he. He shall bite the dust before I have done with him. It is the poor man's innings now! I have bided my time for years and years, but it has come to me at last.'

Frank took two steps towards Rosewarne.

'Sam,' cried he, 'don't, don't, for old

sake's sake, tell me that you are a villain!'

A dark flush rose upon the man's face.

'It beant for you, maister, to heave such a word at me as hev known 'ee, man and boy, all your life, and always been main fond of 'ee. I didn't move in it till I thought you would be pleased to spite that proud old devil for scorning of miss.'

Mabel reddened crimson, and broke out with vehemence.

'Do you think, man, that my father or I would ever sanction a cowardly revenge? Do you think that we, *we*, would wreak vengeance, or be pleased to have vengeance wreaked for us upon the family of those we love, for doing what they have a perfect right to do? Do you suppose that *we* are devoid of Christian charity?—that *we* have no sense of old friendships, or good neighbourhood, or real attachments, or

humility, or due appreciation of the fitness of things; that *we* should so resent a gentleman's pride in his own and only son? Did you dare to make *me* your excuse for wickedness such as you have planned? How dare you? How dare you?'

Sam Rosewarne was confounded by the girl's sudden outburst of resentment. She stood before him transfigured with indignation, for perception of the consequences of this malevolent story had flashed upon her at the same moment as upon her father, together with the knowledge that she had been used by this fellow as an excuse to his own conscience for working out his own ruthless purposes.

Quiet, gentle Mabel had never been so carried out of herself in her life before. She choked for breath, and could say no more.

'Well, miss, you need not rave at a man like that, for taking of your part.'

Passion had its way again.

'My part? Mine, mine? You dare to say so to my face? You dare to insult me like this? You dare to make me the instrument for ruining the man I love?'

Frank came over to her.

'My dear, my dear, you are assuming too much. I have my grave doubts as to what Sam here has been doing, and I fear —I sadly fear—that he has not been acting as we would have wished or expected of him, but you are assuming that he is a blacker villain than he may be. You are taking it for granted that he has originated a vindictive and—and—well, there is no other word for it—a damnable plot, sir.'

Frank began with judicial calmness, but his own indignation, as instinctive and irrational as that of his daughter, overmastered him at the end of his speech. Rosewarne quailed before the pair. Mabel pointed at him in superb scorn.

'Look at him, father! Look at his face! Is *that* the face of an honest man, the face of a man who is simply trying to put a long-hidden wrong to rights? Is *that* a straightforward or honest face, true in the sight of all the world? You *know* that you have schemed and plotted a lie! You *know* that you have devised a wrong for your own ends—your own wicked ends! You *know* that you are plotting ruin for an innocent man who has done you no injury! Go! Go from our sight!'

Rosewarne plucked up his spirit. With a furtive glance of intense admiration for the girl as she stood before him so unexpectedly wrathful, so grand in her indignation, so beautiful now that she was wakened from her usual sweet placidity, and called out of herself,—standing there flushed, erect, irradiated, flashing her scorn at him,—he felt an intense shame overpowering him, and he strove to re-

habilitate himself in her estimation. Oh! that his own daughter could ever be so splendid a creature!

'Miss, miss, you should not flyte in the face of a man who loves you most as dear as your own father can. One had only to look at you and want to spite they that brought the tears into your eyes.'

It was remarkable how Rosewarne accepted from the first the accusation of villainy, the implication that his story was a plot and a lie. He only attempted to vindicate himself, not to assert his truth. But both Frank and the girl were too angry to notice this. They thought of it long afterwards.

'And you *dared*,' recommenced Mabel, 'you dared to bring these beggar children *here*, and let us be kind to them, and allow my poor father to paint them side by side with *us*, as if *we* took part with them. Go! I loathe the sight of you!'

'I'd better go, maister,' said Rosewarne, taking up his hat. 'Miss will think better of this after a bit.'

'You had better go,' replied Selby. 'I hope you will be able to explain what we fear, but we cannot listen to you now. I will see you another time.'

Rosewarne went. Mabel sank upon the couch from which she had risen, and, covering her face with her hands, wept her storm of passion away. Her father seated himself by her, and tried to soothe her in his own tender fashion, sympathetic emotion in his own face and trembling in his own voice the while. He poured her out a glass of water, and held it to her lips.

'There, there, my pretty, drink a little, do'ee now. Don't take this to heart; there may be some explanation or way out of it. We don't understand the rights of it yet, you know.'

'Father, the man is not true and honest. I saw it; my eyes were opened plainly, and I saw it.'

'Yes, yes, my dear, it was woman's instinct and intuition, and all that, doubtless; but, after all, neither you nor I know what Rosewarne has been about, or whether we are not doing him injustice. My word, May, you gave it him hot!' Frank's *insouciance* was reasserting itself as quickly as usual. 'You did let fly at him like an old mother hen defending her chickens. That young man of yours had better mind what he is about, or he will have cause some day to open his eyes with the amazement hinted at in a certain service, should it ever come to be read over you two.'

'Father,' whispered Mabel, colouring yet more scarlet, flushing over neck and brow and bosom, and hiding her face on her father's shoulder,—'father, if this wicked man takes dear Charles's inherit-

ance from him, there is no longer any reason for—for—not being friends with him, is there?'

Frank laughed till he could laugh no more. His changes of mood were always rapid.

'Friends with him! Do you think it would be a friendly act to saddle him with a little shrew like you? How if you flew out at *him?*'

'Don't, father. Dear father, I am in earnest.'

Frank clasped her yet more fondly to him.

'My darling!' he said, softly. 'My own precious darling! You are your mother's own child. No, dear, if it is so, the bugbear is gone. But, May, he will be penniless!'

'That would be the very time for proving that his friends are true to him,' murmured she.

Her father kissed her in silence. They were interrupted by Mrs. Selby's entrance. She looked excited and nervous.

'My dears,' said she, 'Mr. Charles Grenfell is downstairs.'

'The dickens he is!' cried Frank. '*Que le diable, ferai je en ce galère*, Mab?'

May would not look at him; she had spread both hands over her shame-stricken face, and turned away. Even the back of her throat was scarlet with her hot blush.

CHAPTER XII.

LOSS TO CHARLES MEANS GAIN.

Mr. Charles Grenfell downstairs, at that very moment! What must be said? What could be done?

'We only heard from him this morning,' ejaculated Frank. 'We have only now got an inkling of what is going on at Withiel!'

'He says that he wrote before the doctor's visit on Saturday, and that, when it took place, Sir Theophilus was advised to come up to town to have further advice.

He has been ill, Charles says, with a kind of nervous fever, and it was good for him to be moved from Tregarthen as soon as he could travel. They brought him up rather suddenly, and are all staying in the Hotel Métropole, as the house in St. James's Square is not ready for them. My dears! what have you been saying or doing to Sam Rosewarne? Nurse met him going out, and asked him how he liked the Italian children's likenesses. He swore at her in the most violent manner, and nurse is so upset that she is quite in hysterics. She is actully crying in the nursery now, from being so upset.'

'I'll tell you all presently,' said her husband; 'there is a pretty kettle of fish simmering, wife. Duchess, this is more of your affair than mine. You had better go down and hear what your young man has to say. You can comfort him best. Ask him the questions which you have

been putting to me. He is the best authority for you. He will give you your answer better than I can.'

But Mabel fled wildly, and they heard her bolt herself into her own room. Her father laughed.

'What is it all, Frank?' cried Mrs. Selby, thoroughly mystified.

'Curiosity is woman's curse,' quoth Frank, sententiously. 'You had better take your female questions to a female oracle, and see what the Duchess will tell you. If she won't see that young fool, I suppose I must. Oh, who would be a father! Go to her, wifie.'

He settled himself into his coat, and prepared to go down to the drawing-room.

Mrs. Selby, greatly perplexed and uneasy, yet hoping from her husband's manner that nothing sad or very serious was in agitation, went to her daughter's door and knocked. Mabel did not answer at

first, and her mother thought she heard her crying. She knocked again.

'May, my darling! May! Let me in, my pretty! It is I. What is the matter?'

Mabel, after a few hurried movements, unlocked the door, and admitted her mother, while Mr. Selby went downstairs.

Charles was roaming up and down the room like a lion in a cage. He advanced to his host impatiently.

'Mr. Selby, have you heard my news?'

'I have heard a great deal of news concerning you this morning, my dear sir. Perhaps you will allow me to say that I regret what I have heard more on your father's account than yours.'

'Dear old father! I am glad you put it so, Mr. Selby. I am young, and may make a name for myself yet.'

'But, my dear sir, you do not mean to say that you believe Rosewarne's story?'

'Mr. Selby, I would be thankful to disbelieve it. We have had my Uncle Charles's coffin opened, and it is full of stones. Our solicitor has ascertained that he did marry Tamson Rosewarne before he left England. What would you have me think?'

'Think! Why, that it is a lie, as Mabel told that confounded, malicious, mischief-making fellow to his face just now.'

'Mabel! Miss Selby! Did she, indeed, sir?'

'Ay, you never heard such a termagant, flew at the man and cowed him.'

'My dear girl! Ah! Mr. Selby, the bitterest drop in this cup to me is the conviction that I must give my darling up now!'

'Ah!' said Frank. 'Give her up?'

'Why, what else can I do with honour? Now that I am convinced myself, there is nothing else for it. I have come here on

purpose. But, oh! Mr. Selby, it rends my heart to say it.'

Frank did not know what to do. His own dignity, his daughter's dignity were at stake. He was excessively sorry for the young man, but could not offer May to him, and no words occurred to him.

'You might give me one word of sympathy, Mr. Selby,' said the poor fellow. 'I hoped that you would have been a second father to me, taken me as one of your own. It is not that I do not love her, sir. God knows how dearly I love her.' His voice faltered. 'It is because I love her so much, so very much, that I am come to free her, now that there is no chance left of my ever offering her what she should have. You, who are so happy in your home, Mr. Selby, might feel for a man who has always expected and hoped for the same, and suddenly finds such hopes utterly futile.'

Might feel? Did not Frank feel? Foolish fellow, he was all feeling. He faltered out,

'But, my dear boy, is this necessary?'

'Necessary, sir! You do not understand. If this dreadful story is proved true,—and all corroborates it so far,—if all is true, I am a beggar, with no trade, no profession, and my parents to provide for. I shall never be able to marry until my head is white, and it would not be honourable to keep your dear daughter waiting upon such a hopeless chance. She must not have her life blighted.'

Frank buried his hands in his pockets. What was he to say? He turned to the fire in deep thought, but the fire-light failed to enlighten him. He wished that Charles would go, so that he might consult with his wife; but Charles had no intention of going, or showed none.

'You cannot estimate what this is to

me, Mr. Selby,' began he again. 'No, you cannot estimate it; yet who can do so if you do not? Every hope of happiness is bound up in your daughter, every dream is inspired by her. It was hard enough to bear the thought of loneliness when I feared that she did not care for me, yet all else was bright around me. But now—now when I believe she does love me, when my heart has dwelt upon that delight, and was growing to depend upon its bliss, and when all else has failed me—oh! Mr. Selby——'

His words became incoherent, and Frank's warm sympathy mastered all else. He put his hand upon the young man's shoulder.

'I do feel for you deeply,' said he. 'But—but—is this necessary? I ask again. If May cares for you, poor silly maid, is it not just as well to talk it over with her?'

'It is the only wish I dare to form, sir. May I see her?'

'Perhaps you had better see her mother first, my boy. I will send her to you. Believe me, I do feel for you with all my heart.'

'I think you do, sir.'

'I do, I do. I will send Mrs. Selby to you. You had better stay and share our early dinner. We should be glad to have you. It will be served in ten minutes or so, and we can have a talk afterwards. Horace would like to see you, too. Can you spare the time?'

'Easily, sir. And Miss Selby, may I see her?' Irrational hope was beginning to glow in the lover's breast. What was to be gained by staying, he did not pause to think; Frank's manner was encouraging, that was enough to raise a spurious kind of hope.

'I will send Mrs. Selby to you,' said he

again. 'You must excuse me for a few minutes. I—I—I must just wash my hands.'

He escaped. Upon the stairs he met his wife, and barred her way with outstretched arms.

'Wifie,' said he, 'it is a long time since you used to make love to me under those linden-trees.'

'Frank!' cried she, indignantly, 'I never made love to you. For shame!'

'Oh, did you not? You see it is so long ago that I forgot. But I did hope that you might have remembered what is the correct thing to do with young folks under similar circumstances.'

'What do you want me to do, you foolish man?' asked she.

'Oh, nothing, nothing, as you say you have forgotten everything about such matters. But I have a young lunatic shut up in the drawing-room, raving about the

Duchess, and telling me that he must give her up, and does not want to. And the Duchess has been consulting me as to whether she may not have that idiot now that he has not got a sixpence wherewith to get his hair cut. And I don't know what to say, so I have fled from between the horns of the dilemma upon pretence of washing my hands. I wish I could wash my hands of the whole plaguey business. Just settle it for me, will you, my dear.'

He escaped, shutting himself up in his own dressing-room. His wife looked after him with a mixture of feelings in her face, but the smile predominated, though she sighed too. When he had disappeared, she went on to the parlour door, and entered the room. Charles advanced quickly towards her.

'Mrs. Selby! mother!' he cried, 'have you one word of comfort to give to a famishing man?'

'My poor boy,' said she, taking him into her arms. 'My poor, poor boy, I am so glad you have come to me in your trouble.'

'Must it be trouble of the worst kind?' said he.

'Well, well, would you like to see May yourself?'

'Would I!' cried he.

'I will fetch her.'

Mr. Selby had not pinned his faith upon his wifie's management in vain. Happy is the man who possesses a 'wifie,' upon whom he may shovel all his difficulties.

What further Mrs. Selby said, or Mabel said, or Charles said, never transpired. Frank never asked. There was a long conference behind closed doors. Dinner waited till the cook lost all patience.

When the cabinet council reappeared at last, Mrs. Selby was smiling, Charles

radiant, Mabel shy. Frank, with clean hands, and hair nicely brushed, sat, in his best coat, looking supernaturally meek. Charles came quickly up to him with outstretched hand.

'My dear sir,' cried he, 'I am the happiest man in London.'

'And I the hungriest,' sighed Frank. 'For goodness gracious sake, give me some bitter beer. These emotions are exhausting. *I* am not a lover, you see.'

CHAPTER XIII.

HOMELY COUNCIL.

CHARLES needed no invitation to remain and partake of that family dinner; but, long deferred as it had been, no one seemed to have much appetite for it, and they soon rose from the table.

'Come to the studio,' said Frank. 'Let us sit there in comfort, and let us have some tea there, presently, wifie. Mabel has made the drawing-room so smart that there is no enjoying a peaceful pipe in it now.'

A great fire blazed in the wide grate of the studio, acceptable enough, for snow was

falling heavily outside, and it was a dreary afternoon. No dreariness affected that group of happy people in that unconventional room, however. A great screen was drawn round the shabby deep old sofa, on which Mr. Selby sat beside his wife. Mabel dispensed tea on the opposite side of the fire-place, tremulous light gleaming from beneath her long eyelashes, and rich colour glowing on her fair cheek, as she shyly admitted her lover's assistance with her cups, and met his fond glances.

Horace took up his position on the steps of the estrade upon which sitters were posed; the younger children were in schoolroom and nursery.

The new picture, upon its big easel, stood hard by, and the flickering flames from the fire cast a strange appearance of phantom life over the figures, as they leapt and fell, for there was no other light in the room.

Frank loved to sit thus in his rare hours of rest, and it had always been looked upon by his children as a treat, for a chosen few to be admitted, and share in the quiet.

'Father,' said Mabel, looking up at the painting, 'you will not leave those Italians' portraits there, now, will you?'

'What!' cried Frank. 'Paint out a whole fortnight's work, and fling away thirty shillings paid in good hard gold for the models! Is that the sort of economy which you propose to contribute to the new firm? Grenfell! you will have to keep a pretty close check upon this young woman's petty cash account when you come to disburse the wherewithal!'

'I only wish that I saw my way towards having any petty cash to disburse, sir. My present outlook is about as discouraging a one as any man ever faced. At least, it was so this morning, until you

and this dear girl gave me such stimulus. Some hope is possible now, after your goodness.'

'Have you any plan in contemplation? Is any scheme for your future yet thought of? What are your own ideas?'

'My father must settle that, you know, sir, as soon as I can consult him. He means to fight the matter out to the bitter end, I know. In my opinion, we shall be fighting a losing battle; but I think he is right not to yield without any struggle at all. We have come up to town on purpose to take counsel's opinion on the subject. Mr. Barlow, our family solicitor, thinks Varley the best man for us, and is to make an early appointment with him.'

'Fighting will be a lengthy business,' said Mr. Selby. 'Do you mean to await the end of it, or to begin at once to prepare for possible,—perhaps probable,—defeat?'

Charles drew his chair closer to that of Mabel, as he answered,

'I cannot, just at this moment, sir, be sure whether the brightness of my hope may not be almost as irrational as the depth of my despair the night before last, and this morning. To leave Tregarthen yesterday, seemed to me like abandoning all happiness, and being driven out into the wilderness like a scape-goat. I sat at my window all the night through, trying to bid farewell to every joy in my life. Looking out upon the old gateway through which my forbears had ridden so often to war, or returned from the chase; through which brides had been brought in joyful procession, and our dead been carried in mournful solemnity, I seemed never before to have known how dearly I loved it. It was bitter to think that I should be the first Grenfell for hundreds and hundreds of years who would never drive through it

with my wife by my side, or be carried beneath it to my grave. It had always been my own; it *is* my own; no one has a better right to it than I. I looked along the avenue where one after another of us have played as children, and thought how no child of mine would ever play there; and—and—forgive me, sir—God bless you, Mabel——'

Mabel's hand had stolen into his, and clasped it closely. Mrs. Selby crossed over to him, and caressed his hot brow.

'Mother,' said he, presently, resting his head against her as she stood, 'mother, I even seemed to care for the old empty ragged rooks' nests in the trees. They were forsaken, like my heart.'

'Oh, come now. I say!' cried Horace.

'The birds will go back to them in the spring,' whispered Mabel. 'They are not unhappy now.'

He made a great effort, and recovered

himself. 'I can hope so *now*, my dearest,' he said. 'All looks different *now*.'

There was a pause, and Mrs. Selby returned to her place beside her husband.

Charles resumed.

'At one time I thought that I would emigrate. Then I saw that my father and mother must not be left to face it alone. It is worse for them than for me. This morning I made up my mind to put my pride in my pocket, and go back to Oxford as a poor man, meaning work. It would not be very pleasant, but the fellows would soon stop pitying me, I daresay; and, when once I have taken my degree, I can look out for some employment which would relieve my father of the burden of my maintenance, at any rate, and perhaps allow me to make a cheerful home for them both somewhere or somehow.'

'That is the manly way in which to look upon the situation,' said Mrs. Selby.

'You will find it a relief to begin at once to work, and waste no time. But there must be *some* means left to you. Had Sir Theophilus no fortune independently of the estate? Nothing from his mother, or other relative? Lady Sarah—had she no property of her own?'

'Very little; at least, what we have been accustomed to regard as nothing. I believe that it did not cover her private expenses when she used to come up for the season every year. Still, such as it is, it remains. No doubt there are people who have no more to live upon, and are content; but how can five hundred a-year suffice, all in a moment, without preparation or training, for a woman who has been used to spend many thousands if she chose? She considers her habits simple, and so they are for a lady in her position; but her simplicity would be ruinous extravagance in a country clergyman's wife,

or in hundreds of other ladies as well-born as she.'

'True,' said Mrs. Selby.

'I am so sorry for her,' murmured Mabel. 'She was so kind to Steenie and me.'

No remembrance of her ladyship's pride or hauteur, of which poor Mabel had often been so painfully conscious during her visit to Tregarthen, occurred now to the gentle girl. Only the thought of her hospitality, her generosity, of her delicate old age, and how cruelly she would now miss the luxuries which to her were a second nature,—a necessity of life.

All seemed to perceive the fearful difficulty, and silence fell upon them all, until Horace rose, and stirred the fire into fresh brilliance, throwing on more logs. Renewed cheerfulness there aroused the conversation again.

'The worst of it all is,' said Charles,

'that we Grenfells have always loved land. We believe in land; and have, for generations, put almost all our surplus income into it. I do not know what the law regarding such property is,—that must be inquired into,—but I believe that every rood of land comes into our entail, as well as the pictures, plate, and so on. If the law goes against us, and Rosewarne comes down upon us for arrears of income over all these years, it means simple ruin to my father.'

'Mr. Grenfell! It will kill Sir Theophilus!'

'There is nothing to be gained by laying the burden of the future upon the shoulders of the present,' said he, sadly. 'It must be a terrible grief to him, of course, and none of us can yet estimate what effect so radical a change in our lives may have upon us; but I believe that it is more likely to kill my mother.

My father has a sort of dogged pluck in him which will help him to bear up against unmerited misfortune; but she seems to sink down at once.'

'Do you think that she could bear to see me?' timidly suggested Mabel. 'I might be able to comfort her if she would let me try. I could, at any rate, listen to her, and wait upon her.'

'My darling! If you could not comfort her, no one could. I will talk to her, but it is all very new to her so far, and I do not exactly understand her. She does not take it as I should have expected, but I shall feel my way with her soon, I hope. I have much stronger faith that things will come right somehow, now that you are all so good to me.'

Charles talked himself into a very hopeful state of mind before he took his leave. When at last he rose to go, Horace volunteered to walk with him. He had to

attend a life-class that evening, and his way lay in the same direction as that of young Grenfell, so they set out together.

'This is nice, old fellow,' said Charles. 'I never had a brother before, you know.'

'Sometimes I want one almost as much as you can do,' replied Horace. 'Though I have three, they are not much use to me as to advice or companionship, being so much younger than I. The two girls coming next to me, and the twins being all in all to each other, leave me pretty lonely sometimes.'

'You must look out for luck like mine,' said Grenfell, with a little happy, conscious laugh.

'No such luck for a poor devil like myself,' sighed Horace. 'It is all very well for you. At first, you might have done what you liked with your life, and had money enough to marry upon when

and where you chose. Now, though that is altered, the Duchess is the very girl for you,—not wanting much,—able to manage, and help, and that. But, if a man cares about a girl who needs all manner of things which he cannot give her, it is another matter. The boot is on the other leg then.'

'Is it so with you? Tell me all about it, Selby.'

'No, I don't think I can do that, thank you. There is no use in talking about what can't be helped. One must grin and bear it, but I envy you, Grenfell.'

'Well, that is cheering! I should have thought that I was the last fellow in the world to be envied at this juncture;—except for one thing,' added he, amending his speech with an after thought.

'Ah!' said Horace, discontentedly. 'But that one thing is everything.'

'Was it this consideration which caused

you to give up going in for the Civil Service?' asked Charles.

'Yes, there was no chance at all in hoping that her people would let her go out to India, even if I got a splendid station, and was made judge all off at once. Then, while I was waiting to rise, in some beastly hole or other, every fool with a good-looking face and a rent-roll would be dangling after her, and I not be at hand to see. I could not stand that, you know. Here, I can speak a word to her, now and then, at any rate. I can *see* her, and I know the worst from day to day.'

'You need not be much afraid of the good-looking men, I should think, though the rent-rolls may be a more serious matter.'

'Not afraid! That is all you know about it.'

'Is she very good-looking herself? Prettier than your sister?'

'Prettier than the Duchess! I should think so! Why Mab could not hold a candle to her!'

'Oh! come now! I've seen most of the young beauties about town through the last two years, and there are none to come up to Mabel. Look at your sister's eyes!'

'*Hers* are more languishing.'

'They cannot be as thoughtful or as sweet.'

'Not so thoughtful, perhaps, but far and away sweeter.'

Charles kicked a stone out of his way, rather viciously.

'You are hard hit, Selby, I see,' quoth he.

'I'm not the only one,' said Horace, gloomily.

'Well, at any rate, you have one end of your profession in your hands,' said Charles. 'Some achieve fortune, you know. Let us hope that you will do so

with a lucky hit. Who is she? do I know her? I could help you so much better if I knew her, and her people. I should be able to estimate your chances so much better.'

Horace maintained a resolute silence.

'Well,' resumed Grenfell, after a few moments more, 'if you don't want to tell me, I will not try to force your confidence. But I will say, Horace, that, if I can do anything for you at any time, you may command me. We are brothers, now and for ever. The girl who won't have you is a fool, depend upon it. Keep up your heart, never say die.'

They had reached the hotel where the Grenfells were staying. He clapped his friend on the shoulder, bid him good-bye, and went up to his mother's room, his confidence in his own affairs ebbing out, as he mounted the stairs, in a marvellous manner.

How would Lady Sarah receive the announcement which he had to make to her? She and his father must be told at once. Neither would rejoice with him, he knew that without telling; but what would they say? how would they take it?

He took his courage in both hands as he opened the door of his mother's room first.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

London: Printed by Duncan Macdonald, Blenheim House, W.

16

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 052951941